

UNLOCKING THE NEW NORMAL IN NIGERIA TERTIARY EDUCATION . THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

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Abstract

The paper interrogates the new normal, to unlock its impact on Nigeria tertiary education in post-COVID-19 era. It probes into the recesses of the new normal to ascertain when it made its debut in the nation's tertiary education with a view to unveiling the lethal blow it has made on our tertiary education right from the pre-, during and post-COVID-19 era. The essay indicts the political elite and University policymakers as the salient vectors or drivers of the new normal; so much that the nation's tertiary education has been at the crossroads right from Nigeria post-colonial period till date. It contends that the avowed position of these elites seriously undermines the economic growth of Nigeria since education is the pivot of economic development of any nation. The paper explains this phrasal term - new normal - and justifies why the political elite and University policymakers reprehensible for the drifting and ailing state of Nigeria tertiary education all these years. Doing a brief probe into the history of the nation's tertiary education, the paper points the way forward or recommendations on what must be done to salvage our tertiary education for Nigeria Project to succeed. The essay is a sociolinguistic study and the material harnessed for it is through content analysis of relevant literatures.

Keywords

New Normal, COVID-19, Sociolinguistics, Political Elite, University Policymakers, Economic Growth

Introduction

We begin our discourse to unlock the issues and challenges imposed by the new normal, which has adversely impacted on the growth of the nation's tertiary education, by beaming our searchlight on *sociolinguistics*, since the essay is based on this subfield of linguistics as its linguistic framework. Thereafter, we narrow down on language because language, in its entirety, is the pivot on which the *new normal* hibernates.

Conceptual Issues: Sociolinguistics

Denham and Lobeck (22) state that sociolinguistics as subfield of linguistics is “the study of how social factors – including class, race, and ethnicity – influence language.” Crystal (440-445) observes that:

(Sociolinguistics is) a branch of LINGUISTICS which studies all aspects of the relationship between LANGUAGE and society. Sociolinguists study such matters as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes to language, STANDARD and non-standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, SOCIAL VARIETIES and LEVELS of language, the social basis of MULTILINGUALISM and so on.

Hudson (1) defines sociolinguistics as the study of language and society and society in language. But O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba (477) say that:

SOCIOLINGUISTICS is the study of the relationship between society and language. Language is central to how we deal with other people, and the way we use language says a lot about us. Details of word choice, syntax or pronunciation reveal us to be members of a particular speech community, a group of people who share social conventions, or sociolinguistic norms, about language use.

We make do with the sufficient research material proffered to us by Denham and Lobeck, Crystal, Hudson, O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba, material germane enough to interrogate the subject matter of the paper. The gamut of social problems that stare Nigeria toady on the face can be traced to issues of micro nationalism or ethnicity, class and race raised by Denham and Lobeck, including, of course, details of diction, all of which influence the language of Nigeria political elite and University policymakers; hate speech and fake news occupy the front burner, so much that they make nonsense of national integration and cohesion.

Language: The Way It Is

Language is central to all we do and say. The incontrovertible impact of language and its confounding nature may have informed its definitions by linguists. For instance, Chomsky (13), in his *Syntactic Structures* of 1957, cited in Lyons (7), says of language: "From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements." Chomsky (v), also, in his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, states further: "The idea that a language is based on a system of rules determining the interpretation of its infinitely many sentences is by no means novel."

We observe here that Chomsky developed his radical Grammar, a Grammar that has revolutionized all Language Studies, at MIT, a technological institution like the nation's polytechnics; Chomsky's Grammar not only makes waves, but also has made significant impact on the two divides of Western tradition of linguistics, where we investigate Ferdinand de Saussure, acclaimed father of Western linguistics, and the American tradition of linguistics, with Noam Chomsky trail blazer.

Bloch and Trager (5), in their *Outline of Linguistic Analysis*, quoted in Lyons (4), define language as "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates." Analytically speaking, Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya (34) summarize definitions of language by stating that language is "arbitrary, conventional, vocalized, a system of rule-governed, culturally defined, symbiotic and intangible."

The New Normal

The new normal, according to Anyachonkeya (5), refers to *anomie* and its appurtenance. It covers a wide range of phenomena that will be unveiled in the course of this discourse. The dramatis personae earlier cited institutionalize anomie in public service as norm, while societal norm turns into anomie, even in the eyes of the present-day generation. Anyachonkeya x-rays the new normal to, among other things, include dress code, food habit and preferences, music, and, indeed, every facet of the lifestyle of the society; anomie is a strange culture; failure to key into this bizarre culture makes one deviant.

As a linguistic matter, the new normal, in expanded application, encases corruption and corruption encapsulates many things, such vices as bribery, ethnicity, tribalism, ethnocentrism, executive lawlessness, culture of impunity, violation of rule of law, etc., all of which are realized through spoken, written and paralinguistic features of language. In effect, action and inaction, even silence to achieve desired objective in favour of other group of people, constitute linguistic matter. We may loosely use bribery to sum them up, as bribery often collocates with corruption. Christopher, Achebe's character in his novel, *No Longer at Ease*, in casual speech event, describes bribery as the "use of improper influence (110)."

The political elite and their counterparts of the University policymakers have regularly exploited the linguistic devices of the new normal to run down the nation's tertiary education and their actions have proved a great disservice to their Motherland; hence they unwittingly proclaim themselves as neocolonialists in the garb of patriots. Their unpatriotic role of undermining the tertiary education sector impacts negatively on the economic growth of Nigeria, since education is the bedrock of any nation. Okonjo-Iweala (xvii) poignantly puts this disturbing fact thus: "Nigeria's natural resource wealth has not served its population as well as it should because certain key institutions remain weak or nonexistent and small kleptocratic ruling elite has perpetuated and taken advantage of this vacuum." Dismantling the appurtenance of the new normal will amount to belling the cat; it would be likened to, in the words of Achebe (8): "Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam." Here's the heart of the matter.

The paper seeks to unlock the new normal in Nigeria tertiary education in post-COVID-19 era. One may wonder the rational in wisdom for revisiting this corpus, ipso facto that the author has dealt on it in a number of learned fora. The vexed matter has become expedient in view of lingering interference of envy or lack of information of the political elite and University policymakers in the Polytechnic Education. At a time when *The Federal Polytechnics Amended Act of 2019* has empowered (the Federal) Polytechnics to produce "middle and high level manpower", that National Universities Commission (NUC) has arrogated to itself the powers to interpret *The Act*, at the disadvantage of this tertiary education subsector. The position of the NUC, according to what the Institution's Director Academic Planning told the essayist on phone, is that Polytechnics lack the powers to award Bachelor of Technology other than in *Affiliation* relationship with the Universities.

In its blinker, the NUC Director of Academic Planning contends that he has not read anywhere in *The Act*, where the nation's Polytechnics can go it alone to produce Bachelor of Technology up to the Doctorate in Technological and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The NUC is a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Education with no powers whatsoever, to interpret policy.

The morbid prejudice of the University policymakers has constrained us to join Anyachonkeya (11) in posing the following rhetorical questions to them and their accomplices:

Why have the political elite and policymakers allowed the dichotomies to prevail in the nation's tertiary education all these years? Why have they relegated the nation's Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to the background, such that they cannot produce manpower up to the PhD degree? And why have they pulled out their hair and chewed in oath that academic doctors in the Polytechnics and their Colleges of Education counterparts, who earn it, cannot become professors? Why have they left lecturers and students of the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in the Apartheid enclave? Why do they refuse to allow them to rise to the pinnacle of their profession? Why have they vowed not to create a level playing field for all members of our tertiary education? Why did they insist on isolating lecturers and students of our Polytechnics

and Colleges of Education from enjoying the rights and privileges in an egalitarian society of Nigeria? Are the dichotomies that exist in the nation's tertiary education also available in the western lands of the UK, the US, Finland, Canada, Sweden, Australia, etc., from where we modelled our tertiary education? Why should they insist that the status quo remain? Why do they throw stones in the marketplace? Have they forgotten that he who spat up spat himself? Have they also forgotten that they have kith and kin in the nation's Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, who pine away in that enclave? Why have they refused to reason that the present polarized tertiary education whittles away growth and productivity and thereby retards our growth in technological and vocational education and training (TVET)? Why does JAMB convene a meeting of the so-called stakeholders of Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts to decide JAMB cutoff points and in such forum assign 200 cutoff point to Public Universities, 140 cutoff point to Private Universities, 120 cutoff point to Polytechnics and 100 cutoff point to Colleges of Education? Does it then mean that it is dullards we send to the Colleges of Education to be the teachers of our children, the agreed leaders of tomorrow? Why do they find it an uphill task to approve National Polytechnics Commission for the nation's Polytechnics to balance the equation with the Universities, who have National Universities Commission (NUC) and Colleges of Education, who also have National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE)? Why do our governments and policymakers relent to cleanse the Augean stables by embarking on harmonizing or restructuring the nation's tertiary education? Is that how we give our today for the tomorrow of our youths? Is this then the leg with which nama (cow) would go to Umuahia?

If the Federal Government were gracious enough to give Polytechnics their Commission as is the case with the Universities (NUC) and Colleges of Education (NCCE), the seeming imbroglio would not have arisen. Nonetheless, the struggle continues; freedom does not fall from heaven; you have to fight for it.

The University policymakers are poised to mar our education system. Read, please, the following newflash reported in EXCO WhatsApp Forum of English Scholars Association of Nigeria (ESAN), published by *Daily Trust*, cited in Anyachonkeya (12):

“NECO Registrar to FG: Stop using Maths, English as criterion for Uni(versity), Poly(technic) admission” (dailytrust.com;<https://dailytrust.com/neco-registrar-to-fg-stop-using-maths-english-as-criterion-for-uni-poly-admission>).

Anyachonkeya describes this call by NECO Chief Executive as not only “preposterous, illiterate, and un-academic... and anachronistic.”; why because, he adds, in the history of education in Nigeria, when our learners have gone to the lowest ebb in communicative competence, a time the two key subjects are the major drivers of all disciplines and in global interaction, that a highly placed University policymaker calls for scrapping of English Language and Mathematics as criterion for gaining admissions into our tertiary institutions. Anyachonkeya, in anguish of pessimism, declares: “A hunter’s dog has gone mad and turned against his master!”

Since the only permanent reality is change, we want to inquire into a brief historical overview of Nigeria tertiary education, as the knowledge of it will guide us in determining the present and from there we introspect into the future and thus banish the new normal from the vocabulary of Nigeria tertiary education and in the psyche of the political elite and University policymakers.

A Brief Historical Overview of Nigeria Tertiary Education

Anyachonkeya has done a brief historical overview of Nigeria tertiary education in his mails to Professors ‘Yemi Osibanjo, *SAN, GCON*, Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2-5), and Abubakar Rasheed (12-15), Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC), on the issue of the badly battered tertiary education of our land. We therefore base our discourse on the theme of those mails. Anyachonkeya says that the western education bequeathed to us by the Colonial Britain was devoid of technology and vocational education. It was essentially selfish, to satisfy her needs, which was to produce clerks and unskilled manpower for the fledgling civil service of the colonial Nigeria. Since the curricula were deficient in technological and vocational content, tailored to favour the Colonial Government to the disadvantage of the colonized land of Nigeria, Nigerians were dissatisfied; as a result, of number of Commissions were set up to formulate enduring and functional education that will benefit her citizenry. The Commissions that were set up within two decades, from 1930 to 1950, were Sir Eric Ashby Commission, Sir Walter Eliot’s Commission and Professor Harbison’s Commission.

The Eliot Commission was set up by the Colonial Government on the 13th of June, 1943. The burden of this Commission was to refocus higher education in West Africa for improved service delivery. The focus of the assignment of Eliot Commission was to report on the organization and facilities of the existing centres of higher education in the British West Africa and to make recommendations concerning the future of university development in the West African sub-region. The Eliot’s Commission, which had Rev. I. O. Ransome-Kuti as the only Nigerian representative, submitted its report in June 1945.

The next commission was Ashby Commission, which was set up by the Federal Government in April 1959; it was charged with the responsibility to conduct an investigation into the nation’s needs in the field of Post-Secondary School Certificate and Higher Education over the next two decades, namely, 1960-1980. It was the first time Nigerians were involved in the decision-making process of the educational needs of their father land; the three prominent Nigerians on the Commission were: Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike, Dr. Sanya Onabamiro and Sir Kashim Ibrahim. Ashby Commission noted some progress in the area of school enrollment. The Commission observed with dismay that most of the eighty thousand teachers were pitifully unprepared for the onerous responsibility of teaching and unhappily noted that some three-quarters of the teachers were not certificated.

Then the next investigative panel was Professor Harbison’s Commission, which was on high-level manpower study of Nigeria’s educational future. The Harbison’s Commission attempted to estimate the manpower needs of Nigeria; the duration of the investigation covered, 1960 and 1970. The report was timely; in that it was the first time a notable authority appointed by the Government was able to look closely into the Nigerian manpower needs as well as their educational implications for the future. The Commission brought to the forefront the Nigerianization argument.

On the whole, the Ashby Commission made some significant recommendations on the necessity for the establishment of universities in Nigeria (Fafunwa 155).

Faithful implementation of the proposals of these Commissions, especially the Ashby commission, gave rise to the establishment of the First, Second generation universities and others down the line, till this day. Happily, the curricula of higher education in the country today are in sharp contrast with the Colonial-bequeathed clerical and grammar education.

At present, our focus is to revolutionize our education system and inject technological and vocational education for improved service delivery and in turn create wealth and job opportunities for the teeming millions of our tertiary education products. We are committed to engender economic growth by producing highly skilled manpower with the fear of God who will meet the international benchmark of excellence.

The brief historical overview of Nigeria tertiary education reveals the lacuna, which justifies the rational in wisdom for the Federal Administration to introduce Education Reform in the nation's tertiary education, the bull's eye of next subtask, for unlocking the new normal as a threatening setback. We want to take a brief look at the nitty-gritty of the Reform, for what fell inside the water is looked for with the legs.

The Road Map in Tertiary Education

In his position paper to the media men, Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN), Anyachonkeya (125-18) traces the roadmap so that we may pinpoint where the rain began to beat us for us, to determine where it stopped or will stop in our desperate search of lasting solution to the battered nation's tertiary education. We arm ourselves with the roadmap he has delineated in this essay.

Uniformity of Examinations

The reform begins with the refocusing of the mandate of Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). Rather than having two different matriculation admission examinations for the University (University Matriculation, UME), on the one hand, and Poly-JAMB, for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, on the other, we now have a unified matriculation examination, Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME.

Uniformity in Entry Points

With uniformity in examinations in place, it becomes necessary that candidates have uniform entry points. The healthy implication of this is that all candidates applying for admission into our tertiary institutions must have five credit passes obtained at not more than two sittings. It is no longer UME candidates having superior or more credit passes whereas their counterparts who seek admission into Colleges of Education and Polytechnics had lesser credit passes. With this uniformity, we hope that tertiary education will be reserved for the philosopher-kings. Tertiary education is no longer an all-comer's affair. Candidates who do not have high intelligence quotient (IQ) have no business in the tertiary institution. They will settle for technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education below tertiary education. This option, in all sincerity, does not diminish their status or make them worthless partners in the scheme of things.

The Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education explored making cutoff points for the universities and other tertiary institutions uniform across boards for all tertiary institutions. It is, however, retrogressive and saddening that the same Federal Government reneged and reversed this brilliant policy and recommenced dichotomizing cutoff points of 120 and 100, in a certain year, for the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, respectively, of the so-called institutions of middle level manpower.

For the tertiary teachers, their entry point must be the same. In the reform policy, all academic staff of our tertiary institutions must hold at least a Master's degree, and will not rise by way of promotion beyond Senior Lectureship, unless they hold a PhD degree. First Class graduates and Distinction graduates of our universities (and Colleges of Education with a First Class in Education [B.Ed.] in the new dispensation), respectively, may be retained as Graduate Assistants or equivalent designation for the Polytechnics.

Further Review of the Polytechnics Act

To achieve the national goals and revamp our tertiary education for improved service delivery, Anyachonkeya (16) insists that there is a compelling need to further review *The Act* establishing the Polytechnics as well as related institutions and Colleges of Education and bring them at par with the University subsector. The review has nothing to do with the curricula and mandate of the Polytechnics and allied institutions as well as Colleges of Education. Happily, the Federal Government has already begun the implementation of the reform policy.

We well remember the thrust of the teacher slogan: *No Teacher, No Nation! Teachers are great; no controversy! If you're able to read and write, thank your teacher!* It is feared that we may not fully realize the philosophic resolve of the road map of education reform in the tertiary education without adequately motivating the teaching workforce in our tertiary education and without bringing stability in the tertiary education, without identifying the bottlenecks that cause a lot of hiccups in our tertiary education and nip them in the bud. A level-playing field *must be* created for the tertiary learners and their teachers so that as Bola or Usman is treated, Obi is treated same as well.

It requires political will to achieve this laudable goal. With sincere and purposeful leadership, we can brace the tape. At the moment, the failure of the Federal Government to apply the right master stroke makes us a laughing stuck in the comity of nations and in the intellectual community. Our political leaders and University policymakers must not continue to fail us, for they are entrusted with sacred responsibility to lead their people aright. Their inability to redirect the drifting tertiary education amounts to betrayal.

Ruefully, our political leaders as well as the self-styled University policymakers fail us that we look like over bloated giant to the outside world. When our (tertiary) education system is allowed to decay, in structure and administration, the overall national development is in shambles, since it is the very system that is both engine and hub of the economic growth of the nation state. Of course, there is nothing wrong with our environment. The Nigeria problem, according to Achebe (22), among other things: “is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.”

The New Normal Style of the Political Elite at Education Funding

Apart from its unhealthy collaboration with the University policymakers to run down Nigeria tertiary education, it is a well-known fact the Federal Government, which is the nucleus of the political elite, has been apathetic about and indifferent to funding the Education system, a knowledge industry that nurtures and grooms our youths. Okonwwo (12-13) gives us a picture of percentage figures of nation's fiscal allocation to the Education Industry in its national budget for the past twelve (12) years. Let's view the dismal skimpy allocation, which falls far below UNESCO twenty-six (26 %) percent recommendation.

S/No	Year	Percentage Budgetary Allocation
1.	2011	9.3%
2.	2012	9.86%
3.	2013	10.1%
4.	2014	10.5%
5.	2015	10.7%
6.	2016	7.9%
7.	2017	7.4%
8.	2018	7.04%
9.	2019	7.05%
10.	2020	6.7%
11.	2021	5.6%
12.	2022	7.9

We do not need to mention the sordid infrastructural decay we find in the nation’s tertiary institutions, a grave matter for which Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COASU) have exhausted their elastic limits pleading, cap in hand, with the Federal (and State) Governments to address but without appreciable success. This is the knowledge industry in which Academic Trade Unions have often engaged the political elite of our governments on rather infinite roundtable dialogues; and as a last resort embark on trade disputes to salvage, but met brick wall; that is how we give our today for the tomorrow of our youths. The disturbing position of our governments - action and inaction - is linguistic matter; it amounts to *hate speech*, a facet of corruption; in other words, *neocolonialism*!

COVID-19 as Causative Agent in Nigeria New Normal

We view coronavirus as not only causative agent of the news normal, but also a catalyst of it. How do we know? How do we mean? Anyachonkeya (5,7) is confident that COVID-19, is among the primary agents of the new normal, which has come with a handful of new words and expressions to justify the scientific and technological nature of language. The social media happen to be the salient carriers of the new normal. The strange phenomenon has greatly and adversely affected teaching and learning. It has entered into our lexicon today and is among part and parcel of discourses both in everyday life and scholarship that it has not only been given various names among languages, but has also come with new words into the vocabularies of languages. For instance, Igbo people call coronavirus *okooro*, Igbo synonyms of *ugali* or *nsogbu*, meaning *trouble* in English. The various defence mechanisms adopted to avoid its contraction has got their names and expressions also; such names as *nose mask*, *face mask*, *face shield*, *avoidance of handshake*, *shaking hands with closed fist*, *avoidance of embrace*, *social distancing*, *coughing into flexed elbow*, *hand washing*, *contaminated fluids in the eyes, nose or mouth*, etc., all of which are linguistic.

The new normal, as *bad visitation* (*ajo abibia*, in the Igbo language habit and patterns of thought), has come with it an avalanche of such learning experiences that assail us today as “infodemic”, (clipping, which is information and misinformation during the pandemic), the sociolinguistics of the coronavirus crises, discursive forms of humour in coronavirus era, linguistics of the conspiracy perception of coronavirus and the impact of pandemics on theatre performances.

It was in late December, 2019 that coronavirus was identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China. On December 31, the dreaded unknown virus came to the notice of World Health Organization (WHO). The strange and unknown coronavirus was identified by Chinese authorities on January 7, 2020; it was temporarily named “2019-nCoV.”

The pandemic arrived in Nigeria on the 27th of February, 2020. Since its outbreak, COVID-19 has claimed no fewer than 4, 553, 811 souls at the global level. This staggering figure of our dead from the pestilence is truly an evidence of the pandemic nature of COVID-19 as global health embarrassment.

The “CO” of the virus name stands for the “Corona”; explains Anyachonkeya (16), “VI” for “virus”, and “D” for “disease”, while “19” represents the year of 2019 the disease was reported. Some speculate, he continues, that COVID-19 was transmitted by such animals like bats or pangolins, while some even speculate biochemical weapon in global political and diplomatic supremacy.

We do not rule out the positive aspects of COVID-19 pandemic in education, when we come to teaching and learning because we exploited online technology a great deal. However, this dreaded pandemic ushers in insecurity occasioned by corruption. Anyachonkeya (16) insists that COVID-19 impacted negatively on our education and also precipitated new normal of corruption. He draws our attention to the grand scale corruption that has crept in surreptitiously among the political elite in the dispensation of the so-called palliatives and in the importation of various COVID-19 vaccines, which has drained funds of the commonwealth and which has gone into the pockets of the political elite at the corridors of power. Of course, we will not forget in a hurry, that what aggravated “End SARS” revolution was the discovery of large warehouses where the so-called palliatives, which were meant to be distributed to the distressed and sapped common man on the street, were stacked for clandestine brisk business by those we have elected (or selected) to minister over our affairs. Anyachonkeya’s revelation suggests that the education system has had infinitesimal sum invested in it compared to the colossal figure injected in combating the pandemic; a great deal of the sum went into drains of corruption; read him:

On the global bad visitation of COVID-19 pandemic, we learn that, according to www.premiumsng.com, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced having spent N31 billion in four months to fight COVID-19 pandemic. This figure does not represent the \$3.4 billion emergency support the IMF approved for Nigeria to tackle the economic impact of the pandemic. The two instances are staggered purposive samples of the fortune Nigeria has sunk to combat the pandemic; but were all the staggering whopping sums been truly and judiciously dispensed (22)?

We are not amazed at the morbid hatred and calumny in which the NUC and NBTE chieftains have for the Polytechnic sector as discerned from their position and pronouncements in the October 26/27 National Roundtable Discourse on the future of Polytechnic Education in Nigeria; mindless of the fact that their very kith and kin are inside the professional quagmire of the Apartheid enclave. Indeed, the political elite and University policymakers dine in the same pot. They work against the very interest of the masses they should minister to. They steal from the commonwealth leaving their fellow nationals in penury. They constitute themselves as lords of the Manor. Read and feel the pulse of Odinga (251-252) in the scenic picture he paints about these sadists and perfectionists of our land:

The opportunist or career politician can be the ruin of his country.... The object of neo-colonialism is to change the alignment of independence forces in favour of imperialism, to place power in the hands of those who will forsake the national interest to advance themselves. Manipulating office for self-interest ... is a short step to corruption. The spirit of national reconstruction is killed.... The man in the street or in the field is called upon to work hard, to sacrifice for freedom; yet he sees the ostentatious display of wealth by government leaders and administrators who earn salaries of astronomical sums compared with his earnings. The people begin to ponder the meaning of *uhuru*.

Anyachonkeya (140) describes such critics and metacritics as “jiggers, lice, bedbugs, flies, cockroaches”, to represent semantic features of parasitism; they live on the blood of their host, the silent majority of the masses.

It is necessary at this point to articulate what will represent the problem that has motivated this study.

The lingering new normal in Nigeria tertiary education has been an ill wind that blows nobody any good. The paper is committed to unlock the new normal, which infest Nigeria tertiary education in Nigeria post-COVID-19 era, at a time certain institutions of the political elite and University policymakers insist on truncating and subverting the powers given to the (Federal) Polytechnics to produce “...high level manpower” unless they are subordinated to the University education subsector, a subsector that is also among the nation’s tertiary institutions with similar goals and objectives.

The following questions will guide this study.

1. What is the new normal?
2. How truly patriotic and committed are the political elite and the University policymakers in building a unified tertiary education?
3. To what extent have the political elite and University policymakers kept faith with the five main national goals and the nation’s philosophy of education in building our tertiary education of our dream?
4. What are the imperatives for building a virile tertiary education?

Definition and Goals of Tertiary Education

Nigeria tertiary education is made up of the Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and others. In detail, Federal Republic of Nigeria (36) defines tertiary education and its scope: “Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.” This clarification has become necessary at this auspicious time the nation’s Federal Polytechnics are about to commence gradual phasing out of Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes and to replace them with Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.) programmes, in accordance with the powers conferred on them by *The Federal Polytechnics Amendment Act of 2019(1)*.

Akanulbiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, has set up a Management Committee to gradually phase out HND programmes and replacing them with B.Technology programmes, with a view to ultimately ending up to Doctorate in TVET. The author, the author of the memo that necessitated the Management Committee, reached the National Universities Commission (NUC), to ascertain how we are to go about the commencement of the programme with it. The Director of Academic Planning (DAP) told me, the author, that he had read my text prose to him on the subject matter, which made him to go back to read *The Federal Polytechnics Amended Act of 2019* again, but could not find anywhere it is written that Polytechnics are empowered to mount B.Tech. programmes on their own other than through *Affiliation* relationship with the Universities. I felt hurt, as though stung by a black ant.

There and then I did a polite rejoinder to my colleague and friend of NUC DAP and x-rayed the composition of tertiary education as well as goals of tertiary education. It is this arrogant reaction of the NUC DAP that necessitated the paper for our consideration.

I have outlined the composition of (Nigeria) tertiary education, the composition of which, we believe, is the same with tertiary education of the western world. From this brief interaction, we can begin to feel the pulse of the University policymakers.

We want to acquaint ourselves with the goals of tertiary education, the intent of which is to debunk the arrogant posture of Polytechnic antics, why, for goodness sake, the (Federal) Polytechnics cannot mount their B. Tech. programmes up to the Doctorate on their own.

The goals of tertiary education are laid bare by Federal Government of Nigeria (36) in its *National Policy on Education*; the document states that the “goals of tertiary shall be to:”

- (a) contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (c) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- (d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) forge and cement national unity; and
- (g) promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Through what avenues, we may ask, may tertiary institutions seek to pursue the goals of tertiary education enunciated above? The same Education document replies: “*Tertiary educational* institutions shall pursue these goals through:”

- (a) teaching;
- (b) research and development;
- (c) virile staff development programmes;
- (d) generation and dissemination of knowledge;
- (e) a variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release, sandwich, etc.;
- (f) access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF [we hereby include Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETfund]);
- (g) Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES);
- (h) maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate agencies;
- (i) inter-institutional co-operation;
- (j) dedicated services to the community through extramural and extension services (36-37).

There is no doubt whatsoever that all the nation's tertiary institutions pursue similar goals; none of it is the exclusive preserve or prerogative of the University tertiary education subsector. One wonders where and why the NUC DAP based his incompetent interpretation, that Polytechnics lack the powers to mount Bachelor of Technology programmes, even up to the Doctorate; and why and how he arrogated himself the powers to interpret this policy matter, which he has no *locus standi* at all. For him to do so is *ultra vires*. His interference is but sheer ill feelings of prejudice to perpetuate the nauseating dichotomies.

The political elite and University policymakers need be reminded that the mandate given to the Universities are at variance with those of the Polytechnics; that whereas the University mandate is *Theory*, that of the Polytechnics is *Practical*; that the variation in mandate is in complementary distribution; in other words, the tertiary institutions relate in symbiotic relationships, not parasitic or commensality. Consequently, the Polytechnics *must* be left alone; the blinker or scales of prejudice and envy should drop from their eyes and let the Polytechnics live and run their academic programmes in line with their unique mandate and produce manpower to the highest level of the Doctorate.

Dichotomy in tertiary education is alien and utopia in the western lands from where we modelled our own. So, let the kite perch; let the egret also perch; if any one says no to the other, we refrain from saying 'let its wing break'; but let it show him where to perch. Dichotomy is a linguistic matter; it presupposes language of hate speech; it is among the new normal we want to banish from our land especially in the vocabulary of our tertiary institutions.

We want to consider the pivot on which the goals of tertiary education rests.

Five Main National Goals and Nigeria Philosophy of Education

For the nation's tertiary education to be meaningful, purposeful and realistic, it must anchor on the *five main goals* and *philosophy of Education* of Nigeria. We query these notions. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (6), in its *National Policy on Education*, the *five main national goals* are:

- (a) a free and democratic society;
- (b) a just and egalitarian society;
- (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) a great and dynamic economy;
- (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

While we ponder on the *five main national goals*, let us interface them with *philosophy of Education*, which, according to the national document on Education, are as follows:

- (a) Education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education.
- (b) Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society.
- (c) Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability.
- (d) There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education (6-7).

The Education document avers that “Nigeria’s philosophy of Education therefore is based on”:

- (a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- (b) The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- (c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (6-7).

The *National Policy on Education* clarifies that for the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria’s national goals, education has to be geared towards self-actualization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. Before we proceed further, we ask: Where will the dichotomies that beset our tertiary education lead us to; to light or darkness? Education is meant to open doors and not close it from within.

Having gone this far, let us peruse the *national educational goals* we have mapped out for ourselves and juxtapose them with the dichotomies that envelope our tertiary education with the nimbostratus cloud of premonition.

The *national educational goals*, which derive from the *philosophy*, according to *The National Policy on Education* (7-8), are:

- (a) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- (b) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- (c) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- (d) the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

To achieve these notions, the document insists that “the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:”

- (a) respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- (b) faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions;
- (c) moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations;
- (d) shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- (e) promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- (f) acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (8).

Since the visionary goals of the nation’s education are transparent towards building an egalitarian society, a productive and buoyant nation as interfaced in the nation’s *five main goals* and *philosophy of education* as well as the *national educational goals* as clearly spelled out in the *National Policy of Education*, what then do the political elite and the University policymakers seek to achieve and gain by their insistence on entronement of the new normal of dichotomies, which are utopian in the western lands that bequeathed us tertiary education?

Unlocking the New Normal Entrenched by the Political Elites and University Policymakers

The deplorable and miserable state of the nation's tertiary education does not pique the political elite as well as their accomplices of University policymakers, as they are mercenaries, who fish in troubled waters. They represent the heartless medicine man, who receives his fee while his client lies in the morgue; the Igbo, in their language habit and pattern of thought, put it this way: *Dibia kparaaku, ma ozu nwuru.*

It is against this backdrop that I unlock the new normal entrenched by our neocolonialists, and that I decided to set pen to paper and wrote Professor Abubakar Rasheed (2), a colleague in English and Literary Studies (ELLTs), praying him to use his exalted office to initiate cleansing the Augean stables, in the harmonization of the beleaguered tertiary education. I proposed as follows; and I urge you, the audience of this essay, to read my proposal.

We can achieve complete harmonization of our tertiary education by restructuring or reorganization of the regulatory bodies of National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) into one regulatory body. That regulatory body could still be called **National Universities Commission (NUC)** or **National Tertiary Institutions Commission (NATICOM)**.

Should the name NUC remain, the important thing is that the (outcome of the institution) ... (harmonized) being canvassed for should be headed by an **Executive Secretary (ES)**, but with three (3) **Assistant Executive Secretaries (AES)**. One arm of the regulatory body is to be manned by an AES, who should regulate **university education curricula and its operation**. The other wing with its AES should regulate **National Diploma (ND)** programmes... of (Polytechnics) across the country; while the third AES heads the section in charge of **Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)** programmes. It then means that the curricula of Degree programmes of Universities (and Colleges) of Education and those of our (Federal) Polytechnics will be under the oversight of AES responsible for university programmes.

I further stated in the mail that the proposal is relevant now that *The Federal Polytechnics Amended Act of 2019* now empowers (Federal) Polytechnics to “produce middle and high level manpower – in technology, applied science, commerce and management” programmes. With this landmark advancement, I added, we need to make take more realistic steps to reposition our tertiary education so that it will reflect with what we have in the western world of the UK, the US, Finland, Sweden, Australia, etc., from where we modeled our tertiary education. I lamented that it is disparaging that we modeled our tertiary education from those lands only to come home and deviate from the norm. I hinted that the current situation of our tertiary education is inimical to national security and national integration as the teachers and products of the fragmented tertiary structures cannot find fulfillment in their calling or pursuits resulting in endangerment of growth and productivity.

This mail was not replied, unlike Professor ‘Yemi Osibanjo, who replied me through his Chief of Staff. You may agree with me that his silent position, which is linguistic, is typical of a University policymaker, who would want and insist that the status quo remain, in his firm and

biased conviction that Colleges of Education and Polytechnics teachers and their students remain the downtrodden, who beg bread pieces that fall from their masters' table. You see what we mean, our daunting predicaments.

I made the proposal having at the back of my mind the Steve Oronsaye Report of 2014 (36-37), the relevant portions of it did not receive the blessings of the all-knowing political elite. The beautiful and patriotic 800-page Report, the *White Paper on the Report of the Restructuring and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies*, was presented to President Jonathan after eight weeks of its assignment. The Report has made far-reaching recommendations on the MDAs that should be scrapped; those to be merged and those to become self-funding, thereby freeing funds for much-needed capital projects across the country.

Mr. Steve Orosaye had a private sector background, from where he joined the civil service at a very high level and rose rapidly to become the Head of Service of the Federation. His choice was considered apt in the belief that having come from an original private sector, he would find ways of cutting cost of governing by eliminating wastage through duplicated functions across several government MDAs (Ministries, Divisions and Agencies). The most relevant sections of this Report state:

No. 95. National Universities Commission.... (xi) "the enabling law of the NUC be repealed and a new law enacted to reflect the merger of the NUC, NBTE and NCCE into the proposed Tertiary Education Commission." No. 96. Again, "The Committee recommends as follows, that: (i) the NBTE should be subsumed along with the NCCE under the NUC to form the proposed tertiary education regulatory body to be known as Tertiary Education Commission; (ii) the enabling law of NBTE be repealed; (iii) the enabling laws of Federal Polytechnics be amended to reflect the proposed autonomous status...."

Of either of the recommendations, Nos. 95 and 96, "Government rejects this recommendation." The grand purpose of unlocking the new normal in the nation's tertiary education is to expose the inconsistencies of the pseudo patriots and espouse the right things that should be done in order to halt the drift that has been the lot of our tertiary education right from pre-, during and post-COVID-19 era. The colonial Britain bequeathed us a tertiary education that is incapable of powering the TVET we have mapped out for ourselves. Regrettably, the duo of the political elite and University policymakers set in to retard our civilization. Any expected gains? Of course, yes!

Expected Gains in Unlocking the New Normal in Nigeria Tertiary Education in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Anyachonkeya (27-28) is convinced that the banishment of the new normal from Nigeria tertiary education will rejuvenate our tertiary education in the ways he has advanced and in the process unlock the nation's economic growth.

There will be growth and productivity of both the Polytechnic teachers and their students. When the products of the Polytechnics and their teachers are placed at par with their counterparts of the universities, it will boost their morale and in turn engender growth and productivity.

There will no longer be internal brain drain in the Polytechnic subsectors. Polytechnic lecturers and allied institutions as well as Colleges of Education, who hold PhD degrees, will no longer have recourse to leave the sectors for the university with a view to becoming professors ultimately. Many Polytechnics and Colleges of Education teachers on Reader (or the pejorative *Chief Lecturer*) status are potential professors but *cannot* because of the unfortunate policy that cage Polytechnics and Colleges of Education as *institutions of middle manpower*, leaving them in the Apartheid enclave.

Tertiary institutions will reflect what we modeled from the western world of the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Finland, China, etc.

Our dream to join the comity of nations, especially the four Asian Tigers of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, in the attainment of technological and vocational breakthrough in the nearest foreseeable future will be feasible. In the present circumstance, our aspiration is illusory.

It will increase *access* (that is, admission) opportunities to the teeming millions of Nigerian youths who yearn for tertiary education, as our Polytechnics and their allied institutions as well as Colleges of Education will be able to produce manpower up to the highest level of the Doctorate.

Let us not argue that the removal of the new normal may proliferate or swell the number of Universities in the country. In the first instance, the existing Polytechnics and Colleges of Education have their facilities and staff in place. What we have to do is to massively equip them in as much as all the nation's tertiary institutions are grossly ill equipped. Furthermore, Nigeria population is hypothetically fixed at two hundred million, with 163 number of (Federal, State and Private) Universities (Wikipedia, as at July 7, 2020). On the converse, Argentina, as at 2006, with a population of 38 million, has a total number of 1,758 Universities (Ogbuagu 71). Nigeria problem is leadership. Let us not forget Achebe's (1) immutable statement: *The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership!*

Our Colleges of Education and Polytechnics as well as allied institutions will have professors on their employ as is the case in the western lands.

With the removal of the dichotomies, there will be a level playing field, resulting in the reign of egalitarianism as against Apartheid policy that is in place in the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education subsectors of our tertiary education.

The Nigerian youths and their teachers entrapped, as it were, in the blind alley of the tertiary education subsectors, will be liberated from the cage of the parrot they have unwittingly found themselves.

Our Polytechnics and Colleges of Education will no longer be a blind alley for the academic staff as well, since they can attain to the cherished level of self-actualization as professors, for those who earn it.

Implication of Findings

The die is cast. It is evident that tertiary education of Nigeria has been in shambles since Post-Independence period till post-COVID-19 era. The causative agents, the vectors, are not in doubt, the political elite and University policymakers and they are not in a hurry to shift grounds owing to envy and prejudice.

Their inability to shift grounds with their new normal implies economic retardation of the country, hence a great disservice to their Fatherland.

The study has vindicated the fears well founded in the problem that has motivated the study, and the research questions have had answers adduced in the body of the work based on the content analyses of available literatures.

In the light of the prevailing circumstances, there must be change, positive change for the better. That is why we join Anyachonkeya (16) to take memory lane on the contemporary realities, which has made it superabundantly expedient to let go the new normal that retard our progress in the nation's economy, vis-à-vis, tertiary education, the engine and hub of Nigeria economic development.

We reflect on certain educational programmes that used to be in vogue in Nigeria, but now are in the relics of history. Exigencies of time and space have made them no longer necessary or desirable for their continued existence.

We operated Higher School Certificate (HSC). Before 1974 most of our secondary schools saw themselves stripped off the privilege to mount HSC programmes. Today Higher School Certificate (with its Lower Six and Upper Six) has been phased out.

In the later 1980's the same fate began to be the lot of our Teacher Training Colleges that used to award Teacher's Grade II Certificate. By then holders of West African School Certificate (WASC) in Divisions One to Three or even School Certificate Attempted (i.e., holders of *Statement of Result* or *SR*), or even those who went into the programme during the *Universal Primary Education (UPE)* days, had it for five years, were qualified to go in for Teacher's Grade Two Teacher Education. As the HSC programme went into oblivion, so also the TC II programme is now in the archive of our national history. We need to add that we used to have Colleges of Arts and Science. The former sites of these Colleges of Arts and Science served as haven for our present-day 1st and 2nd generation universities, such as Ahumadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; University of Benin, etcetera (16). So, we want the *change mantra, NOW!*

Fully aware that the walking style of the chick does not please the kite, the chick has to persevere in its punctuated run to ensure that its predator or pursuer has falls. Having unlocked the vectors of the new normal of our tertiary education, we, once more, pronounce them mercenaries and neocolonialists, who must not be given a breathing space. The man, who is envious of the other man's beauty, will have his own beauty perish for him, if not take shelter with the ground.

These mercenaries reap where they have not sowed; they throw stones in the marketplace; they are the proverbial goat that lies on the ground. Let them give the kite and the eagle a common forum; let them see relationships that exist among the tertiary institutions as a game of the dogs; if you fall down for me and I do so; does not that suggest play? But if they carry the carcass of elephant on their head and at the same time toss the carcass of cricket with the leg; that means avarice. They insist on plucking all theseeds on the treetop of the oil bean. He who takes his bathe and ties clothe should mind himself, for the leg that walks *wa m-wa m*(absurd and ambivalent moves); the eye that sees *wam-wam* (sees absurd and ambivalent things), sees it.

Recommendations

We still base our recommendations on Anyachonkeya's (20-21) recommendations on similar subject matter, with slight adjustments. Let us explore them.

The Federal Polytechnics Amendment Act of 2019 Act needs further amendment so that its academic staff can rise to the professorial status for those who earn it, as well as their retirement age extended to seventy years as is the case in the university subsector and as it is in the western lands, from where we modelled our own.

The mandate given to the polytechnics and university education remain; the *practical stress* in the polytechnic programmes produces high caliber manpower with ample skills and competencies needed to power our industries of the labour market.

Option One: The nation's polytechnics should be granted *Magna Carter* or university charter and converted to **Universities (of Science and Technology)** as was the case with the polytechnics of the United Kingdom in 1992; we yet keep to the Polytechnic mandate.

Option Two: Our polytechnics should be renamed *Polytechnic Universities*, in which case we simply emulate the American system of tertiary education policy, who has such institutions in her tertiary education system. This master stroke will diminish or eliminate brain drain, occasioned by the mass exodus of the PhD best brains of our Polytechnics and Colleges of Education teachers to the university system with the intent to become professors, ultimately.

Where either of the options is not admissible, we call and ask for *National Polytechnics Commission*, a regulatory body that will regulate academic programmes of the nation's polytechnics, National Diploma, Bachelor of Technology to PhD certificates in TVET, which they award in tandem with the *Practical stress* mandate assigned to them. This will bring to an end the lingering interference of the University policymakers and political elite, either due to envy or lack of information; in the process, the grass suffers, as two elephants are interlocked in combat, resulting in the suffering of Nigerians, everybody's kith and kin, ironically.

The nation's Colleges of Education, the duo of the despised tertiary institutions, should be converted to Universities of Education; in which case, they should award Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and Bachelor of Arts or Science in Education up to PhD.

The dichotomies that exist between the so-called institutions of middle level manpower and the university tertiary education sub-sector are an ill wind that blows nobody any good; therefore, they should be jettisoned; for they are inimical to the philosophic goals of education in Nigeria. *What is good for the goose is as well good for the gander!*

The present Chief Lecturers of our Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, who hold PhD degrees, should be conferred with professorial title for those who earn it. In effect, the civil service appellation of **Chief Lecturer** given to the teachers of the Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education systems, be replaced with **Professor**; while **Principal Lecturer** position be replaced with **Associate Professor** or **Reader**.

As in the university system of assessment, no Polytechnics or College of Education teacher with a Master's degree should be promoted up to **Senior Lecturer** position without a PhD degree.

Something drastic must be done to abrogate all vestiges of dichotomy so that the cream of the polytechnic tertiary subsector and their students as well as Colleges of Education be freed from the shackles of Apartheid policy and the rights and privileges due to the academic staff and their students be granted them as enshrined in the *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as Amended. Let my people go!*

The reform policy in education is Hobson's choice, since it is in consonance with the Nigeria egalitarian society, *a land where no man is oppressed* and a country *even though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand* and, indeed, *a nation bound in freedom, peace and unity*(*Old National Anthem, 1960; New National Anthem, 1978*).

The Federal Government should reconsider its position on the *White Paper on the Report of the Presidential Committee on Restructuring and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies* recommendations, Nos. 95 and 96, which it rejected; that is, that "the enabling law of the NUC be repealed and a new law enacted to reflect the merger of the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE into the Tertiary Education Commission"; where we discard giving Polytechnics *National Polytechnics Commission*.

Now that the National Roundtable Discourse on the future of Polytechnic Education in Nigeria has come and gone; should the powers-that-be of the political elite assume silent posture on the commencement of B. Tech. programmes in favour of the (Federal) Polytechnics, we urge ASUP NEC to persuade the Federal Ministry of Education, by way of engaging them in dialogue, to make a policy statement/pronouncement directing the NUC to begin, without hesitation, visitations to the Federal Polytechnics to determine the staffing and facilities of their academic programmes, and grant approvals to those qualified to commence B. Tech. programmes on their own capacity without recourse to the Universities in Affiliation status, since *all* tertiary institutions stand on equal status as defined by the *National Policy on Education*, and as it is also applicable in the western lands.

Conclusion

The paper has interrogated the new normal in a bid to unlock its impact on Nigeria tertiary education in post-COVID-19 era. It has also probed into the recesses of the new normal to ascertain when it made its debut in the nation's tertiary education with a view to unveiling the lethal blow it has made on our tertiary education right from the pre-, during and post-COVID-19 era. The study evinces that the political elite and University policymakers are the salient vectors or drivers of the new normal, so much that the nation's tertiary education has been at the crossroads right from the post-colonial period till date.

The paper has argued that the avowed position of these elites seriously undermines the economic state of Nigeria since education is the pivot of development of any nation. Having explained the phrasal term - *new normal*-it has been able to justify the reason for finding the political elite and University policymakers squarely reprehensible for the drifting and ailing state of the nation's tertiary education all these years, which is envy-induced neocolonialism.

The brief historical overview of the history of the nation's tertiary education has enabled the paper to make recommendations on what must be done to salvage our tertiary education for Nigeria Project to succeed. That actions and inactions of these 'saintly' villains are linguistic evidence, justifies the choice of sociolinguistics as linguistic framework for the study; while harnessing its material via content analyses of relevant literatures.

The paper does not claim to have said the final word on all facets of the new normal, as defined in this essay, as well as the imperatives that must be done in order to cleanse the Augean stables for our tertiary education to be rescued from being ferried across the Sty and its subsequent dinking of the waters of the Lethe. We invite concerned Nigerians, tertiary education stakeholders in their own right, to join voices and redeem and reclaim our tertiary institutions from falling to the point of nadir, for it would result in the derailment of our Motherland.

We round off this essay by drawing the attention of the pseudo patriots to the following classic declaration of Nnamdi Azikiwe:

The aim of education in Africa is to develop the youth of the country (in our case our Motherland) and prepare them for service to the people. The university (or tertiary education) should produce a generation that would be reliable, useful, and intelligent in the rapidly changing life and circumstances of the people (*University of Nigeria Students' General Handbook 7*).

The Nigeria youths and their teachers, who would implement such vision, must all have common inalienable right to aspire to whatever height available and not be caged by man's action, man's inhumanity to man. That is why we put up spirited struggles to restore the dignity of man, the Polytechnic teachers and their counterparts of our Colleges of Education as well as their students, so that thick soup may be enough for our soup.

Until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution.

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