

**THE ACADEMIC EMANCIPATION OF A PEOPLE THROUGH POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION: A  
STUDY OF ASIKA'S PIMPLES ON WRINKLES**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the academic emancipation of a people through polytechnic education, using Asika's *Pimples on Wrinkles* as a case study. The research explores how education, particularly polytechnic education, serves as a tool for intellectual liberation, skill acquisition, economic empowerment, and social transformation. The study is anchored on the premise that education is a fundamental instrument for national development and individual advancement. Through a critical textual analysis of the novel, the study investigates the author's portrayal of the challenges confronting educational development, including poverty, inadequate educational facilities, societal prejudice against technical education, and limited access to quality learning opportunities. The findings reveal that polytechnic education plays a significant role in empowering individuals with practical and entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-reliance and sustainable development. The study further shows that Asika presents education as a means of overcoming ignorance, unemployment, and social inequality, thereby fostering personal growth and community development. The novel highlights the transformative power of education in shaping responsible citizens and promoting socio-economic progress. It also underscores the need for greater societal recognition of technical and vocational education as an essential pathway to national advancement. The study concludes that academic emancipation can be effectively achieved through the promotion of polytechnic education, which equips learners with relevant competencies for the modern economy. It recommends increased government investment in polytechnic institutions, curriculum enhancement, improved infrastructure, and public enlightenment campaigns to improve the perception and effectiveness of polytechnic education. The study contributes to the existing literature on education and development by demonstrating the relevance of literary works in addressing contemporary educational challenges and advocating academic liberation through practical education.

**Keywords:** Academic emancipation, polytechnic education, technical education, skill acquisition, educational development, socio-economic transformation, empowerment, Pimples on Wrinkles.

**Introduction**

Educational emancipation connotes a need for freedom. We recall that the nation Nigeria was colonized from the mid nineteenth century. This means that Britain took control of the governance and sociocultural leadership of the people. It should be noted that what we have today as Nigeria is an amalgamation of the Southern protectorate to the Northern protectorate. This simply means that two or more nations were coerced into one. Consequently, these people's cultural social and educational life were harassed into subjection to the ruling authority irrespective of their cultures, which we equally know are relative and each (culture), in turn retains her relativism.

Educationally, is Nigeria on top of her game or are there things to desire in the educational sector of the nation? The Polytechnic education in the nation, is it in the top notch? Are their things to put in place for a wholesome polytechnic education? This is the main thrust of the paper viewed according to *Pimples on Wrinkles* by Asika Ikechukwu E. Recommendations follow conclusion to critical insights from the study.

Meanwhile, art for art sake, also called the formalist theory forms our critical framework. However, deductions from previous studies on the same text equally lend some supportive hands.

Art for art sake or formalism is one of the earliest literary theory in literary criticism. The approach which structurally studies the text material based on its form: theme, plot, setting, character, language and point of view is second to none, for a comprehensive analysis of a literary text. The approach coheres in her narratives with the other approaches that the education in Nigeria is in dire need of emancipation, especially the polytechnic education. It particularly considers words and their meanings, including context and styles, taking cognizant of every implication of figurative language. It also takes note of tones, and voice pitches in informal communication styles.

The study is structured into parts for a better planning. Part one views definition of terms as they relate to the study; part two delves into the analysis of the study as it concerns the topical issue.

### **EDUCATION, MEANING:**

Education from the etymological Latin source of the word educere and educare mean to lead out, and to nourish respectively, (en.wikipedia.org). Consequently, 'educere', to lead out, allow an easy flow out of, help one to bring out from the inside is informing. The idea is that there are inherent virtues, qualities, endowments, within every individual, that needs to be led out, for his own use and the use of others. Assenting to this view, the book of wisdom and knowledge in 2 Pet 1: 3- 8 records that God has given to us (man), all things that pertain to life and godliness. This shows man as the storehouse, harbinger of everything good thing.

Naturally, man does not carry evil, he is permitted to carry only good which creation endowed on him. Man is fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139: 8). Science on its own discovery confirms a child "tabular raza", at birth denoting that man equally did not come out with evil from nature. Science, based on knowledge supplies such information through data and analysis, but every manufacturer, has a manual that decodes materials encoded in his products. So, it is, with man and creation.

'Educare' also, which is to train, nourish, bring up, imports the sense of inculcating, putting into, nurturing, imputing. This second level in education suggests some interplay, and exigent relationship naturally demanded of man with others of his kind and, his environment. Through creation, no man is an island, (male and female created he them, Gen: 1: 27, (Keneth De Young). This reveals further the place of relationship, interactions, communication and team spirit which are directly or indirectly involved in education. Education builds up, it instills, beefs up, upgrades improves. This level recognizes equally the massive endowments of nature outside man and their designed interplay with man for a proper and optimal living. It activates the senses, especially the sense of reasoning in man.

To activate means to cause something to be active. Education keeps man's reasoning active, receptive, critical and analytical. Consequently, the parameter for measuring education is reason(ing). How do one reason? Does one reason at all? What are the priorities in one's life? How does he / she pursue those priorities/destiny? Education makes a world of difference in all. Dr. De Yong adduces the model of education in life wherein connection, reflection, dignity and destiny reflect the master piece of divine centeredness.

Furthermore, ' Urevbo (1990) considers education as the consummate learnings and training acquired by an individual corroborated in www.wikipedia.org. Education makes much difference in individuals as well as their lives, choices, impacts, contributions, vision as well as fulfillment of purpose. It is vital to note at this juncture that every properly channeled education aims at one's fulfillment of purpose.

### **Polytechnic education:**

The Polytechnic education is one of the institutions of higher learning that is technically oriented. It relates to the institutions in applied science and technology where skills and practical are prioritized. (quora.com) The Polytechnics provide the required training for industrial and business establishment's manpower, as well as such for the managerial cadre in institutions. Being supervised by the National Board for Technical Education, the Polytechnics has all it takes for skill acquisition in the national diploma and higher diploma levels with the appropriate attention. In some nations Polytechnic education is equated to a degree awarding institutions while the others award degrees in the technological areas as university of technology.

In the Nigerian society, the institution started with the historical recognition as source of the societal middle manpower supplier (free encyclopedia, 2007) and has remained such despite serious evidences of infrastructural / human resources upgrades. This is quite enervating, especially to the team of staff that remain at the receiving end of the poor remuneration / working system.

Other issues of concern relate to proper equipment required for practical such as language laboratory for communication skills, laptops and computing units, for teaching and learning, power supply as well as network failure.

### **Part Two: Critical Analysis of Pimples On Wrinkles**

Considering the education encountered in the novel Pimples On Wrinkles, the study is compelled to review and revalue education in the setting, for a sustainable life in the digital era.

The Agovu street as the setting of Pimples on Wrinkles is bedeviled by corruption, , bribery wickedness, and witch hunting. It is a land of plenty drowned in poverty as a result of mental/ moral mediocrity, irrationality and divisiveness. A deconstructive analysis carried on the Agovu street by the author elsewhere revealed the street as

the post-colonial Nigerian society. (The Socio- cultural...). Pimples on Wrinkles, a work by Asika Ikechukwu, not only denounced the sociopolitical challenges of the setting, but also the educational / academic challenges of the Nigerian setting.

Consequently, Education is the heart beat of development and progress. With education, civilization is turned around, in education, the fundamental human rights are in place while every individual knows, understands when to stop. Infringement into others' rights and privileges is reduced to minimal. Law and other assumes its right of place with proper education while sociocultural matters and affinity are respected. Most importantly, rationality and appropriate reasoning is ensured.

A peep into the Agovu education system underlines the need for the study. There cannot be a meaningfully sustainable society with an inefficient or poorly remunerated, equipped educational system. The Polytechnic education has what it takes to turn the Nigerian society around, considering the human infra structures available all things being equal.

Pimples on Wrinkles is a Social novel, that critics the entire processes of the Agovu setting. Starting with the chief character of the novel, it is evident that rational reasoning is a rare commodity in the setting. The ironical implication of the name Odiolisa, poses a question that is revealing. He, (Odiolisa) parades himself as believing and fearing God, but eventually presents himself as deceitful and godless as anyone else in the setting, when he committed suicide for simply facing the usual, day to day challenge of life.

What could cause it, but lack of knowledge. Mr. Odiolisa is not aware that challenges are champions tonic, (Homer, The Odyssey), (William Shakespeare, Henry iv), Ernest Hemingway, A farewell to arms), (Freidrich Nietzsche). He is not fully developed, (educated) mentally, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically

There is no doubt that education in the setting is corrupt as it is questionable: the author records that an unqualified teacher, who read home economics in the institution of higher learning is posted to a secondary school 'to teach English language, Biology, Chemistry, Commerce, Economics, Geography and in some cases Mathematics', (57). The question is, 'who is doing the posting?' "Is he a toddler? that does not know left, from right? or a trader? that understands money better, than when people make noises? or a supervisor? who ought to know better?"

The study chooses to believe that either the person does not want education, or that a higher authority in the setting compels the action in order to frustrate the institution of learning. We further learned that the teacher is allotted what to teach per time, depending on the mood of the principal. This, makes the point clearer. Hence, if the principal is unhappy, the teacher's subject changes, not minding his skills or methodology/ qualification.

Consequently, at such a foundational stage in education, ignorance, rather than proven knowledge is preferred and etched into the subconscious of the evolving students with little or no remedial attention to the confusion. It is more worrisome and devastating to note that this state of comatose is instituted by the head of the institution, the authority itself. 'If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?'(Psalm 11:3-7).

This simply signifies that the authority, leadership, head of administration, the government, the power arm of the setting, willfully and willingly submits her educational sector to touts, mercenary, jobbers, mediocrity. The novel remarks that subject allocation to the teacher answers to the mood of the principal. This implies that both the skill acquisition and the renunciation of the work force depends on the leadership manipulations. What a setting.

As a result, if the leadership is a drug peddler, the society then feeds on drugs, the education sector notwithstanding. There is nothing like utility in service, where one serves willfully and willingly. Where then, is the place of creativity and innovation in education which is the bedrock of growth and sustainability.

The first pointer to this milestone in educational 'exploits' is the life of Azubuike (Zubby), the honourable commissioner for works. He transits from Department of Estate Management in the University to the village of Konshisha as a "teacher of English, Biology, Chemistry....Mathematics"

Before some analysis of the educational prowess of the Agovu teacher, the paper quickly notes that the honourable continues his 'exploits' after the service through Morocco to Libya where he consolidated in drug peddling that later announced him as the 'big shot' in Agovu on his return. We must not fail to remark that this is the honourable commissioner for works in the Agovu street.

Considering the Agovu teacher above referred, and his teaching mission, any keen discerner will not fail to ask questions like: "is this what teaching is all about?" Are there policy makers in the setting?" Which other exploit is bigger than one person teaching all the subjects in the school? He can be encyclopedic, as we note in the evolving honourable commissioner for works. However, the efforts are wrongly directed through uncoordinated supervision and inappropriate planning.

One clear indicator to the chaotic charade remains that he teaches without skill, curriculum, specialization. What is the impact on both the teacher and the student? No positive one, even on the society. The result is the junket from Morocco to Libya via Casablanca to others. One revealing question we need an answer is: "to what academic skill does Zubby's sudden progress respond to? It responds to none rather than fraud. In order to maintain status quo, and make ends meet, academic wise, in the place of research and academic innovations in one field or the other, they get involved into such frauds as special exam centers and the like where they create assess to easy money making through trading on brains.

This forms the education innovation in the nation as readily revealed in Zubby the honourable commissioner and his elitist likes.: " you can frown your face and go after the money without looking out for your father or mother"(64). The tide has changed. It is money all the way. Instead of sharpening the wits of the young graduates towards research and innovative lifestyle, they are introduced to "money by all means" which they explored to the fullest: "His route of exporting and supplying drugs in....Africa was becoming more sophisticated and complex and he had plans on how to make it to the top" (65). This must be a nation without a leader, else, it is a questionable leader.

The more painful aspect of these frauds is the extent of involvement of key players, leaders, institutions and the knowledgeable.

The result is that instead of leading out knowledge, proper understanding of life, rationality, better and harmonious living and experience, progress mindedness, one perceives that in the system, the ingestion of injurious cabbage that infuriates both the individuals and the society.

Educational skills and specialization are the knowledge every individual owes himself and the leadership owes to the citizens in order to live optimally to life's challenges. These skills, sometimes acquired through a day today activities of the individual, is still a function of the environment/ setting and her leadership. A focused leadership is ever conscious and committed to the needs and aspirations of the led.

It could also be assessed through properly planned training and skill acquisition programs under the watch and supervision of government in power. Skills like communication skills, relationship skills, problem solving, critical thinking skills, conflict management, digital skills, coping with technology, active listening, adaptability and resilience, time management, organizational and self-management skills are the basic skills carefully and consciously instilled into the young brains at the secondary school level for a meaningful and effective management of life. Committed leadership demands not only a timely acquisition of these but also an effective one ([www.britishcouncil.com](http://www.britishcouncil.com)),([www.globesandmail.com](http://www.globesandmail.com)), [www.huffpost.com](http://www.huffpost.com)).

Sequel to the above, it is specialization that gives room to proficiency and productivity as a result of division of labour. Specialization derives from mastery and consistency in use of trade and service. This is the ultimate use of every education.

Needless stress the importance of acquiring these skills correctly and appropriately. It opens up the vista, perception and understanding of an individual to his / her real personal essence, as well as the purpose of the citizen of any nation, (<https://www.indeed.com>), (<https://www.scribd.com>), Here is the reason for education. The one that leads out (educere), the abilities, purpose, inert deposits of an individual. The type that trains, brings up, (educate), nurtures, activates the respective skills and consequently guides same to specialize in the one / ones he gains some relative economy of large scale in production.

### **Conclusion**

The Nigerian nation possesses all it takes to blossom and flourish through polytechnic education. Its naturally endowed human resources are more than sufficient to transform the nation rapidly if they are properly guided and harnessed. What remains questionable, however, are the mechanisms for effective planning and supervision, which are often hindered by uncommitted leadership. These are essential for the polytechnic education sector to thrive and achieve its full potential.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study of academic emancipation through polytechnic education as portrayed in Pimples on Wrinkles, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should strengthen polytechnic education by providing adequate funding, modern infrastructure, and up-to-date technological facilities to enhance practical learning and skill acquisition.
2. Polytechnic curricula should be regularly reviewed to align with current industry

- demands, technological advancements, and labor market requirements, thereby increasing graduates' employability.
3. The societal perception of polytechnic education should be improved through public awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of technical and vocational education in national development.
  4. Equal employment opportunities should be provided for graduates of polytechnics and universities to eliminate discrimination and encourage more students to pursue technical education.
  5. Industry-institution collaboration should be strengthened to facilitate internships, industrial training, mentorship programs, and practical exposure for students.
  6. Entrepreneurship education should be intensified in polytechnics to equip students with self-reliance skills, enabling them to become job creators rather than job seekers.
  7. Parents and guardians should encourage technical and vocational education by recognizing its value in promoting economic empowerment and social mobility.
  8. Scholarships and financial assistance programs should be expanded to support students pursuing polytechnic education, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
  9. Lecturers and instructors should receive continuous professional development training to improve teaching effectiveness and keep pace with emerging technologies and pedagogical methods.
  10. Students should be encouraged to develop innovative and problem-solving skills can contribute to community development and national economic growth.
  11. Policy makers should formulate educational policies that promote academic emancipation by ensuring equitable access to quality technical education across all regions.

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