



Address by Michael Ikpoki

CEO MTN, Nigeria

The Founder and Chairperson, Inoyo Toro Foundation

The Board of Trustees of the Foundation

Our exemplary and inspiring awardees

Members of the school community here present

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it a privilege to be a part of this 7th edition of the Inoyo Toro Foundation Annual Awards for Teaching Excellence in Akwa Ibom State Public Secondary Schools and thank the organisers for the opportunity to make some remarks at a gathering of such far-reaching consequence.

I must first of all commend the Inoyo Toro Foundation for the great strides and impact they are selflessly making in Education in Akwa Ibom State. I say far-reaching because progress in the education field will always create a ripple effect in other segments of society. Certainly the Inoyo Toro Foundation recognizes the pivotal role of education in state and national development. That of course is why the activities of the Foundation are built around Education and why this annual award ceremony targeting our almost always unsung heroes - teachers, was instituted.

Kudos to all teachers who meet and exceed the standards that the Inoyo Toro Foundation seeks to uphold, through these awards and particular commendation to the awardees. You are exemplars of the attitudes, behaviours and actions that will yield powerful positive results in our educational system and indeed in all of society and are most deserving of these awards and much more.



I dare say that for you, today's event represents much anticipated reward for hard work as well as a strong impetus to do even better. As well it should. Permit me however to add my own view of what today represents. For me, it represents a **catalyst** for ensuring **relevance** in tomorrow's world. Put another way, I believe that today reminds us that we have in our midst critical influencers who **can unleash** fresh potential, **drive pace** with change and build **considerable leverage** for Nigeria on the global stage. I am not referring to government officials or even business icons. I am talking about teachers - the very same professionals that we are gathered here today to celebrate and recognise. Teachers are catalysts, teachers are influencers and to borrow a well-used description by best selling author: Malcolm Gladwell in his book: **The Tipping Point**, teachers are mavens. The word maven describes people who hold and share knowledge to the extent that in Gladwell's estimation, they can spread change with a multiplier effect that transforms societies. This sort of groundswell is what he describes as The Tipping Point; a breakthrough-kind-of-success in relation to paradigm shifts and in my view, the kind of shift we would do well to facilitate and embrace in our educational culture, mindset and practices to ensure that our children can operate effectively in a world now markedly different from what we've always known.

Why do we need a Tipping Point in the first place? - New World Skills

I can confidently say that there is no one in this room who has not marvelled at the rapid changes taking place in life as we know it- no area of human endeavour or interaction is exempt. It is instructive to note that these changes are not only taking place, they are doing so at a rapid rate. If you've ever felt a wave of panic or concern about your ability to keep up with change in this current age, then consider that the speed with which scientific and technological advances continue to happen and the never-ending globalization shrinking our world into one village, means that our children will be dealing with much more in far less time. Therefore, not making deliberate, consistent

preparations to equip them will be akin to sending them into sub-zero temperatures with inappropriate clothing. They will simply be unable to function, easily left behind by those already braced to battle the extreme weather. While this analogy may come across as quite dramatic, the actual changes required immediately need not only be so. They can be big, sweeping movements as well as small, consistent ideas and practices. What is crucial is that they gain momentum very quickly and spread like wild fire just as the rapid advancement taking place across economies, workplaces, social systems and human interactions. This is why we need a tipping point and precipitous type of change across the education sector in Nigeria. There is simply no time for anything less. Today's world and that of the future requires a different mindset, skills set and tools set and quickly too! A practical example here is the result of a study on the most important work skills required in the year 2020. Some of these include:

- Sense Making; looking beyond the obvious and drawing deeper meaning
- Cross-cultural competency; functioning successfully in a globally connected world by appreciating different cultural frames
- New Media Literacy; navigating and interacting successfully in the viral, uncensored new media space
- Trans-disciplinary; familiarity with diverse disciplines
- Social Intelligence; effectively navigating diverse social interactions
- Novel & Adaptive Thinking; generating creative, out-of-the-box ideas

These are just some of those identified as the top future skills guided by studies of the emerging trends which have the potential to transform the global workplace and marketplace. Now compare the skills above with several of the more traditional ones such as: operations, organisational, project management, report writing skills. The two categories of skills are now country miles apart! The more traditional skills are



reminiscent of an era when success was achieved in the midst of disciplines kept neatly constrained to their specific fields while the skills of the future demonstrate that borderless, far-sighted, global citizens rise to the top very quickly because they recognise that the competitive landscape is a great, global expanse.

So how then can teachers as a collective prepare students to operate successfully and contribute meaningfully in such a global society? How are they using and supporting the educational system to prepare our children for an open, innovative world of unparalleled transformation and interdependencies? How can teachers position themselves to effectively stimulate young minds to cross the threshold into being global actors who perform creditably on the global stage? What are we - Government & private sector players, NGOs etc. - doing to support these changes unfolding right before our eyes. Confidence is a currency for success in this new complex World. How are we equipping our children with confidence to prepare them for this new World?

As we ponder these questions, let us also note that the breadth of change in perspective that will first be required on a personal level before it can be taught to others in a credible manner will be quite significant. This means that both teachers and students will need to be prepared to both imbibe new thinking as well as shun unprogressive ideas. It was Alvin Toffler, the American writer and futurist who said:

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn".

To my mind, these are: The New World skills.



Success will come and go but Integrity is forever.

Integrity means doing the right thing at all times and in all circumstances, whether or not anyone is watching. We live in a World where integrity is not talked about nearly enough. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favour than silver and gold (Proverbs 22:1 KJV). It may look like people gain power easily if they cut corners. Dishonesty can provide instant gratification in the moment but will never last. There are several examples of people who have cut corners, secured benefits from their position and appear successful - but they have lost their ability to be trusted as a person of integrity which is the most valuable quality anyone can have in their life. Profit in money or power is temporary but profit in a network of people who trust you as a person of integrity is forever. The word of your character to a few can spread like wild fire. This is immeasurable and brings with it limitless opportunities and endless possibilities. Contrast this with a person who cannot be trusted as a person of integrity. Warren Buffet, Chairman & CEO of Berkshire Hathaway said it best: "in looking for people to hire, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. And if they don't have the first one, the other two will kill you". A person's dishonesty will eventually catch up to them. It may not be today or for years to come, but be rest assured that at some point there will always be a reckoning. One way to manage this is to avoid those who are not trustworthy. Do not create an environment for such interaction. We must not underestimate the power of the educational sphere for driving a great deal of the change we seek in our communities, states and nation as a whole. Some of us imbibed such positive values from our teachers and Institutions. This perspective does not discount the staggering material and human resources required to surmount many of the challenges which impede successful teaching. I hold the conviction that teaching Integrity not as a concept but a comprehensive, all-inclusive way of life with practical examples and references is one way of driving ethical standards in all things and at all times in our society as well as building the next generation of Nigerian leaders. Certainly, the onus will also be on the educational system to reinforce these teachings through individuals and systems that model the



desired behaviour. Some may see this thinking as naive and simplistic but should remember that there are still many whose commendable behaviour and the values upheld till today were learnt from teachers and the unapologetic discipline and rigour of the educational institutions they attended.

To our dear children, we must emphasize that nobody will give you any serious responsibility in your future careers or endeavours if you cannot be trusted. That is why when you graduate from school (Primary, secondary & University) it is said that you must be found worthy in Character and in Learning. Capacity or competence must come with Values.

So what do we do?

Starting with small steps...

I dare say that the small steps we can take to ensure relevance: reviewing the relevance of the curriculum, teaching methods and educational culture to future success especially in this new World spoken earlier. Our individual, collective and /or corporate support to education can speak to the areas of relevance highlighted here. Integrity & leadership role modelling should be an intrinsic part of our education experience for our children.

This call extends to all other credible members of civic society and influencers. We can indeed initiate and facilitate critical discourse, policy prescriptions, implementation strategies and partnerships to drive the learn, unlearn and relearn ethos that will need to be adopted as part of a new cultural operating system for building a more relevant educational ideal in this country. We can be part of strategic advocacy groups and definitive activities to promote educational methods and tactics that will serve as the tipping point for the change we so urgently need.



While we complain about all the challenges within our environment today, each of us can create an **Oasis of sanity** around ourselves. What does this mean - personally influencing things around you to make sense for your good and good of mankind. It means we can do little things within our power to improve our society. In little ways, we can support our teachers and students to prepare our children for today's World realities. The more of us that do these little things, will make more oasis into lakes, rivers and an ocean for transformation of our society. Inoyo Toro Foundation have started doing little things some seven years ago to support teachers... it is now becoming an ocean for change.

As I encourage you to be part of this future, I applaud your efforts in the present and on this note, commend the Inoyo Toro Foundation for yet another successful awards ceremony. I also congratulate all award recipients once again and trust that you will enjoy this event in your honour. You certainly deserve it.

Thank you all for your kind attention.