

Address by the Deputy Governor of Akwa-Ibom State

Protocol

It was the late popular global leader, Nelson Mandela who stated that ***“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”***

As seemingly simple as it is, the potency of that statement is not lost on humanity in view of its quintessential truth.

It is in appreciation of this common understanding and the need to advance the cause of education that we are gathered here today to honour some of the distinguished gatekeepers of our educational sector, as well as celebrate the unraveling of a vision by the Inoyo Toro Foundation.

With an elaborate agenda aimed at encouraging the study of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and English Language in Akwa Ibom public secondary schools; create an awareness on the importance and benefits of specializing in the sciences and to complement government’s efforts in providing quality education, it is my belief that the Inoyo Toro Foundation’s contribution can be qualified as epochal in all respects.

I am further impressed by the fact that this foundation has found it worthy to address the fundamental questions in our educational system from the level of teachers who form the critical link in the system, by stimulating positive and healthy competition among them as a means of engendering excellence in the system.

Let me therefore use this auspicious occasion to express the sincere gratitude of the state government to this foundation for the great work it is doing in our secondary education sector, especially in the area of its mentorship programme.

The mentorship programme provides opportunities for individuals or organizations to adopt any secondary school of choice and mentor the best students with a view to



broadening their perspective about life and enhance their self-esteem and motivate them to be better students.

In spite of the promises and possibilities the mentorship programme holds in this era of partnerships, only very few individuals have so far signed up for this scheme. Out of a total of 256 participating schools, only 59 schools have been adopted for the mentorship programme.

In consideration of this, I wish to use this opportunity to call on interested individuals, old boys, corporate organizations and philanthropists to hearken to this clarion call and adopt these schools in order to add significant value to the educational system. It is my sincere belief that these efforts will go a long way in helping to mitigate some of the problem areas in the system.

On the part of government, I wish to reiterate the fact that the free and compulsory education policy from the primary to secondary school level, is still in force.

With the secondary school enrolment currently standing at 347,697, spread across our 241 public secondary schools, the state government not only pays WAEC and NECO fees for the students, but government also provides monthly imprest to school principals.

With respect to the recent cancellation of the appointment of teachers recruited by the government, it is necessary to emphasize here, that following an avalanche of complaints within the educational sector and subsequent discovery of underhand dealings in the course of the recruitment exercise, it had become obvious that the only way the system could maintain its credibility, was to nullify that exercise. Further investigations also confirmed that large sums of money were extorted from desperate job seekers and some even ended up with fake employment letters. A number of such people are currently with the police.



His Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel has assured all stakeholders in our educational sector that when proper logistics are put in place to rationalize the former process, the government will affect employment in the sector to augment the present staff population of 11,000 in the secondary school section.

It is important to stress here that the 5,000 persons who received letters of appointment will remain candidates in the next recruitment exercise, and therefore have nothing to fear since all of them will be given equal opportunity in an atmosphere of transparency, to prove that they earned their recruitment in the first instance.

Finally, given the huge benefits derivable from educational foundations such as this, I wish to call on public-spirited individuals and organizations in our state to emulate the good gesture of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, and partner with the government in order to enthrone quality educational development in Akwa Ibom.

Thank you and God bless.

Moses F. Ekpo