

The Greatest Source of a Teacher's Satisfaction
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The Inoyo Toro Foundation's activities are focused on the tripod of the Students, the Teachers and the Mentors. The Chairman's Remarks will be directed at the three groups.

STUDENTS

As students, there is always that feeling that the whole world is against you. We all felt that way as students. You think that your teachers do not like you, and are unduly harsh on you. All your experiences at school are weighed against that mindset. We all felt that way at school, but my experiences later in life showed how wrong I was, and how unfair I was in my attitude to and treatment of my teachers, who in fact had my best interests at heart at all times. I had a maths teacher who was a great disciplinarian, and was despised by most of us students, mainly because many of my classmates hated maths, and in my own case I just could not stand his disciplined stand on all issues. We played pranks on him and caused him as much discomfort as we could muster. About twenty years after I had left school, one of my sisters ran into that teacher, and when he learnt that we were related, my sister said that the man was so excited and stated that I was one of his best students, and that he was very happy to learn about my progress in life. You can imagine how sad I felt; when I remembered all the nasty things we did to him. You need to know, while you are in school, that your teachers sacrifice so much to ensure that you are educated. They stand in the stead of your parents, while you are in school, and they take enormous pride in your progress. You need to let them know that you appreciate the work that they do, and give them a reason to be proud of you by putting in your best efforts in all that you do.

TEACHERS

Your profession is one of sacrifices. Successive generations of teachers have fallen victim of warped government policies which always situate teachers in the lower rungs in the remuneration of government workers. Teachers are very lowly paid. They are owed months of salary arrears and their general condition of service reflects the lack of care for their wellbeing. The

teacher's job appears like a thankless job. That is perhaps why it is said that your reward as teachers is in heaven. I realised sometime last year that a teacher's satisfaction does not come with remuneration or financial recompense. I attended a formal dinner where the dinner speech was delivered by a former law teacher at the University of Calabar. The man narrated his pride at the realisation that his students at University were now senators, Commissioners, and one of them, he said was now the governor of Akwa Ibom State. He beamed with pride when he said that the young student who used to call him "sir"; "I now proudly call him "Sir"..." Seeing your students progress and attain feats even beyond your own imagination is probably the greatest source of satisfaction of a teacher. As you wait patiently for the miserly salaries that you are paid; as you suffer through harsh conditions of service, draw strength from the hopeful young faces that look up to you to shape their lives, and build the foundation of their future.

MENTORS

My first interaction with this foundation was when I mentored my village school two years ago. The experience changed my perception of the educational needs of our young people. I can tell you dear mentors, that bringing your alma mater or your village school here, is only the beginning of your involvement with them. In my own case, as I sat with the young students and talked to them, and shared experiences, I saw for the first time the individuality and personality of the students. I felt drawn to their needs, their hopes and their dreams. I wanted to be part of their successes. In fact I wanted to be the reason for their successes. I found out that the two final year students in the group had no text books in the sciences or mathematical sets or scientific calculators to help them prepare for their WASC examinations. I found out that for the cost of a meal at the Chinese restaurant opposite my office in Lagos, I could buy all the science textbooks, the maths set and the scientific calculator that each student required. So mentors please do not see your role as starting and ending at these awards. Put a name to the faces around you, and follow up on their progress. Meet their needs as well as you can and be a part of their lives.

Let me congratulate in advance, all the awardees for the year 2011.