

An Address by the Chairman, Award Committee of the Inoyo Toro Foundation at the 6th Teachers' Award for Excellence, Held at Le Meridien Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, Uyo on November 08, 2013.

Protocol.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, I welcome you to this sixth Award Ceremony which is aimed at celebrating excellence. Last year we celebrated the fifth anniversary of this Award and various prizes were won by teachers who excelled in their teaching. That ceremony witnessed the last presentation of the late Chairman of the Award Committee, Professor Ebong W. Mbipom who regrettably passed on in February, 2013 and was laid to rest on March 22, 2013. Mbipom excellently pioneered and piloted the work of the Committee as Chairman for the first five years of the Award. I do crave your indulgence to rise for a minute of silence in respect of the late Professor. . . May his soul find rest in the bosom of Jesus Christ, the One he served faithfully. Amen.

Being my first award presentation, I wish to thank the Board of Trustees for the appointment and pray that we will be able to carry on with the good work of the late Prof. Mbipom.

That ceremony also brought about an expansion of the focus of the **Foundation**, arising from the lecture delivered by Mallam Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai (*Former FCT Minister*). Two school subjects, History and Economics, have been included (as he requested) in the list for Award. Our experience in the field clearly justifies this step particularly concerning History as the subject is becoming extinct in our schools. This move, however, increased the scope of the Committee.

Let us remind you that the aims of the **Foundation** are to

- encourage teachers of Science, Mathematics, English, History and Economics in our public secondary schools,
- stimulate awareness for the study of these subjects,
- promote healthy and positive competition for excellence among teachers and
- help teachers to be more committed to their profession as they constantly update their knowledge and help to mentor other colleagues.

Through this project, the **Foundation** is also supplementing the Akwa Ibom State Government's effort in her educational development, because when the teacher is well recognized and motivated, *he will teach from the heart, not from the book!* We

also believe that teacher motivation is the key turnaround strategy for addressing the poor results in these subjects.

The Award is now in seven (7) subjects: Mathematics, English Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History and Economics. Each subject has three winners, with the first prize winner receiving ₦250,000; the second, ₦150,000 and the third ₦100,000. This year, 50 public schools were screened. A total of 145 teachers, made up of 31 English, 22 Mathematics, 20 Biology, 26 Chemistry, 35 Physics, 3 History and 8 Economics, teachers qualified for the selection test. The small number of History teachers is indicative of the dearth of teachers in the subject in schools. Based on this premise, we may suggest that those teachers who opt to teach History could also be invited to join in the screening for award until the situation improves. The State Government should also embark upon employing more teachers of History to address this situation in our schools.

For the information of those who are new to this event, the learning environment, availability of laboratories (for the science subjects) and libraries, form part of the school assessment for the genuineness of the high scoring schools. The final screening test is in two parts. The first part is an aptitude test based on the WAEC syllabus but needs speed and accuracy, for just 40 minutes. 117 teachers reported for this test. The second part is an oral examination meant for those who pass reasonably well in the written test.

There is another category in the Award. That is, the Grand Mentor Teachers' Award, through which the Foundation challenges past winners to produce their kind through regular mentoring sessions. This year, the Award Committee decided that a mentor must himself scale the written test, in addition to the field performance, before being considered for the award. A total of 12 mentors attended the screening test (made up of 2 Mathematics, 2 Biology, 2 Chemistry, 3 Physics and 3 English teachers) out of which five (5) were successful in the listed five subjects.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to state that for both the Excellent Teachers' Award and the Grand Mentors' Award, the screening process and the written and oral tests were handled according to preset rules and procedures with transparency and integrity. The expert examiners were two per subject and were carefully selected from the University of Uyo. I would request that we acknowledge them as well as the Principals of the winning teachers.

Our Appreciation

On behalf of the Award Committee, I wish to appreciate the Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation for their continuous commitment to this noble project which is beginning to impact positively in the performance of our students in public examinations. The Board deserves our highest commendation and thanks.

We also thank the Akwa Ibom State Government, steered by his Excellency, Governor Godswill Akpabio, for their investment in education at all levels in the State. We are grateful to the Hon. Commissioner for Education, the Permanent Secretary, the Chairman, Permanent Secretary and Directors of the State Education Board, and Principals of Schools for their support which helped our selection process during the year. I also thank the Examiners from the University of Uyo for setting, administering and marking the aptitude test in situ and with integrity.

I would like our teachers to take seriously the words of Robert John Meehan (author and widely recognized as *the Voice of American Teacher*):

“Teachers who love teaching, teach children to love learning”

and of William Arthur Ward (author of *Fountains of Faith* and one of America’s most quoted writers of inspirational maxims):

“Teaching is more than imparting knowledge, it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts, it is acquiring understanding”.

We congratulate you for being teachers and for being good mentors of Akwa Ibom youths, the future leaders of our State and nation. Please, teach for children to be inspired enough to love learning! For the students who are present in this programme, I wish to encourage you to take your studies seriously and in particular, try to heed the counsel of your mentors who have themselves made their mark in the society.

Finally, for the Award winners, I hope you will not rest on your oars. There is still work to do to prove your worth and maximize your potential. This award may only be a spring board to higher heights and an open door to other opportunities.

Congratulations!

Thank you and may God bless you all very richly!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua