

**An Address by the Chairman, Award Screening Committee of the
Inoyo Toro Foundation at the 7th Teachers' Award for Excellence,
Held at Le Meridien Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, Uyo
on Friday, November 21, 2014.**

Protocol.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, I welcome you to this Seventh Award Ceremony which is aimed at celebrating excellence. This ceremony marks the completion of a cycle and significantly coincides with the convocation of undergraduates of the University of Uyo at which the founder of this project performed a key function. We are now in the position to appraise the impact of this project which started in 2008.

Last year, the scope of the award was expended by the inclusion of History and Economics. However, this year we are not going to award teachers in these subjects, rather there is a new subject added to the list, that is, Fine Arts. This subject has been discovered to be almost extinct in our schools. Only a few schools present students for external examinations in the subject and yet in these days of dire need for job creation, it is one area that can provide self employment more quickly than any other. The Foundation therefore seeks to encourage the development of this subject by rewarding the teachers who have been working in this subject with little or no attention. Our list is therefore made up of six subjects this year.

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

- encourage teachers of Science, Mathematics, English, and some other endangered subjects in our public secondary schools,
- stimulate awareness for the study of these subjects,
- promote healthy and positive competition for excellence among teachers,
- help teachers to be more committed to their profession as they constantly update their knowledge and help to mentor other colleagues and
- provide mentorship opportunities for the students of public secondary schools by volunteers drawn from different professions.

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 learning and subsequently the poor results in these subjects.

The Award for this year is in six (6) subjects: Mathematics, English Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Fine Arts. Each subject has three winners, with the first prize winner receiving ₦250,000; the second, ₦150,000 and the third ₦100,000. This year, ___ public schools were screened. A total of 109 teachers, made up of 17 English, 17 Mathematics, 17 Biology, 29 Chemistry, 22 Physics and 7 Fine Arts teachers qualified for the selection test. The small number of Fine Arts teachers is indicative of the present situation of the subject in schools. We hope the publicity and motivation provided by this programme on this subject will encourage students, teachers and the Government to pay attention to it for the promotion of the skills, arts and culture of our people.

The modalities for assessment of schools for the award include the learning environment, availability of laboratories (for the science subjects) and libraries, as well as the score of the school in external examination. The teacher is then assessed based on his productivity and professional competence. The final screening test for selection of the winning teacher is in two parts. The first part is an aptitude test based on the WAEC syllabus for just 40 minutes. The second part is an oral examination meant for those who pass reasonably well in the written test. For the Fine Arts teachers, this aspect is done by assessing the arts works produced by the students of the teacher. (They had no pre-knowledge of this.)

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 of other teachers in their subject area within their neighbourhood. The mentor must himself scale the written test, in addition to the field performance, before being considered for the award. A total of 11 mentors attended the screening test (made up of 1 Mathematics, 2 Biology, 3 Chemistry, 3 Physics and 2 English teachers) out of which 5 (five) were successful in the listed five subjects.

Mr. Chairman, Guest of Honour, Guest Speaker, I wish to present these winners for award of prizes at the appropriate time during this programme. I also 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 consultants from the University of Uyo. I

would request that we acknowledge them. We also acknowledge the remarkable cooperation received from the Principals of the winning teachers.

Our Appreciation

On behalf of the Award Committee, I wish to appreciate the founder and 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 commendation and thanks for this platform for service.

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 and the Permanent Secretary as well as 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.

Conclusion

I would like our teachers to take seriously the words of Carl Jung:

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

of Joyce Meyer:

Teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges.

And of Brad Henry:

A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.

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. James Levine once remarked “*I was lucky that I met the right mentors and teachers at the right moment*”. Don’t take them for granted!

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 which are numerous.

Congratulations!

Thank you and may God bless you all very richly!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua