

**Welcome Address by the Chairman, Award Screening Committee of
Inoyo Toro Foundation at the 8th Teachers' Award for Excellence,
Held at Le Méridien Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, Uyo
on Friday, November 06, 2015.**

Protocol.

I feel delighted to welcome you, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, to this Eighth Award Ceremony. The main purpose of this event is to appreciate and celebrate excellence in the prime profession which is most often ignored in the list of attractive professions. I wish to remind us that teaching is more than a service, profession or a job; it is *a pillar of the society* and should be appreciated. This year's ceremony marks the beginning of another cycle of seven and is the first to be witnessed by His Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel, himself a son of a great teacher and former headmaster. We are glad to welcome him to this event.

This year, we have re-introduced Economics since we now have a sponsor for the subject. We now altogether have seven subjects. Let us hope that we will have a sponsor for History which is becoming very attractive in the universities but hardly has teachers at the secondary level. The Foundation still seeks to encourage the development of subjects which may not appear to be popular but are very critical in our economic and socio-cultural development.

At this point I would like to remind you of the aims of the **Foundation** as follows:
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 in our schools.

The Award for this year is in seven (7) subjects: Mathematics, English Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics 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, a total of 159 teachers, made up of 26 English, 36 Mathematics, 34 Biology, 16 Chemistry, 29 Physics, 13 Economics and 5 Fine Arts teachers attended the selection test out of 217 that were invited.

The modalities for assessment of schools for the award include appraisal of the learning environment, availability of laboratories (for the science subjects) and libraries, as well as the score of the school in external examinations. The teacher is then assessed based on his productivity and professional competence in the subject area. The final screening test for selection of the winning teacher is in two parts. The first part is an aptitude test for just 40 minutes, based on the WAEC syllabus. The second part is an oral examination meant for those who pass reasonably well in the written test. In order to strengthen the excellence of the award the Screening Committee decided that hence forth the first, second and third prizes can only be merited if a contestant scores at least 70%, at least 60%, and at least 50% respectively in the final results. This explains the absence of a first prize in English and first and second prizes in Mathematics this year.

Another category in the award 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. Of the number of mentors that attended the screening test, five (5) were successful each in English, Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Mathematics.

Mr. Chairman, Guest of Honour, Guest Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, 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. Allow me at this juncture to introduce a hard working lady, Yvonne Nkang, who came on board in June 2015 as the Foundation's new Program Coordinator at the exit of the very versatile Idorenyin Mbang who served meritoriously since the inception of the Award. I wish him the best in his new assignments.

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, now steered by his Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel, for her 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 Permanent Secretary and Directors of the State Education Board, and Principals of Schools for their support which helped our selection process during the year. The Foundation is also grateful to the Consultants from the University of Uyo for setting, administering and marking the aptitude test in situ and with integrity.

Conclusion

We have noticed the poor performance of some of the teachers in all the subjects under consideration. This is reflective in the poor output of some of the products of our public schools. The school authorities and educational managers should therefore sit up, raise the tempo of the school and cause teachers to be conscientious and diligent in their duties. Our teachers should note that:

A teacher takes a Hand, opens a Mind and touches a Heart. He presents the past, reveals the present and creates the future to the student. He is a doctor who heals ignorance and an artist who inspires creativity.

Albert Einstein once said: *It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.*

It is therefore imperative for teachers in our public schools to be committed to their duties and teach for children to be inspired enough to *love learning!* We, however, congratulate you for being teachers and for being mentors of Akwa Ibom youths, the future leaders of our State and nation.

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 external 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 a lot more work to do now 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 numerous opportunities.

Congratulations!

Thank you and may God bless you all very richly!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua