

**Welcome Address by the Chairman, Inoyo Toro Foundation Award
Screening Committee at the 10th Teachers' Award for Excellence,
Held at Le Méridien Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, Uyo
on Friday, November 03, 2017.**

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, I am delighted to welcome you to this Tenth Award Ceremony, which is being specially packaged. In the course of the year, we have been involved in a number of activities and courtesy calls on certain persons to announce this event.

The aims of the **Foundation** include, 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 students of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, by volunteers drawn from different professions.

Over these 10 years (from 2008), we have sustained positive contributions to the development in the study of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, English Language, Economics, Visual Arts and History in Akwa Ibom State public secondary schools through these Annual Awards for excellence in teaching. This has fostered a positive and healthy competition for excellence amongst teachers. With over **1,560** teachers in the net, of which over **170** teachers have benefited directly from the monetary awards and intervention trainings/workshops, the awareness and competitiveness of teachers in public schools have been phenomenal.

The Foundation in 2011 established the **Grand Mentor Teacher's Award**. The aim of this award category is to provide an avenue where teachers who had previously won the Teachers Awards, would mentor other teachers in their subject areas, thereby developing their teaching capabilities, honing their mentoring skills and generally making them better teachers. So far, over **100** teachers have won in this award category.

The mentoring program established in 2009 has seen professionals and corporate organizations adopting schools of their choice and engaging in the mentoring of

select students from these schools on an ongoing basis. Over the years, **92** schools have been registered on the program and almost **1600** students engaged.

Through this project, the **Foundation** is also supplementing the Akwa Ibom State Government's effort in her educational development. We believe that teacher motivation is critical in addressing the apathy exhibited in the teacher's work experience and will subsequently enhance performance and service delivery in our schools. According to Aristotle, Education is *an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity*. It should therefore be highly priced and jealously guarded. Unfortunately, it is hardly so in Nigeria. For instance, the JAMB cut off score for Colleges of Education is usually the lowest. This year it has nosedived to an alarming 100! What a fall it is!

At this event, we are set to appreciate and celebrate our teachers who have excelled during the year in the foremost profession of teaching. This profession, which is a pillar of the society, as it gives birth to every other profession, ought to be so recognized and those involved in it should also be appreciated.

This year the Award is for eight (8) subjects: Mathematics, English Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, Visual Arts and History. Each subject is expected to have three winners, with the first prize winner receiving ₦250,000; the second, ₦150,000 and the third ₦100,000. A total of 188 teachers, made up of 23 English, 13 Mathematics, 35 Biology, 42 Chemistry, 33 Physics, 26 Economics, 13 Visual Arts and 3 History teachers attended the selection test out of 400 teachers that were invited this year.

The modalities for assessment of schools for the award include:

- appraisal of the learning facilities and environment,
- availability of modestly equipped laboratories (for the science subjects) and libraries,
- the score of students of the school in external examinations.
- assessment of the teacher based on his productivity and professional competence in his teaching subject area.

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/NECO curriculum. The second part is an oral interaction between the resource persons and those who pass reasonably well in the written test.

In order to strengthen the excellence of the award, 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 first and second prizes in English and Mathematics; the absence of first prizes in Physics and Visual Arts, this year. History has returned but with very low turnout of participants. This subject was featured in 2013 and was suspended due to lack of sponsorship. We hope more teachers will be interested in the teaching of this *endangered* subject. I also hope that the award will be sustained.

In the Grand Mentor Teachers' Award category, the mentor must himself scale through the written test, in addition to his field performance, before being considered for the award. The Grand Mentor award attracts ₦500, 000. Of the number of mentors that attended the screening test this year, five (5) were successful each in English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Economics. There is no grand mentor in Mathematics this year as no mentor attended the screening exercise. The mentors in Visual Arts who participated in the screening test did not meet the initial requirements.

In 2016, the Foundation also instituted the **Principal's Award**, which is aimed at rewarding the efforts of exceptional public school heads, who have distinguished themselves in pushing the academic advancement of their institutions. Ten principals were selected through an instrument generated in collaboration with the State Secondary Education Board. In it, the principals were requested to provide a dossier of their achievement in the school since appointment, which response was then scrutinized based on earlier evaluation by ministry officials. Ten of them were shortlisted and then visited to appraise their claims by the Foundation's team. Nine of them scaled that hurdle with different scores and were invited to the screening test, though only seven responded. Consideration was given to practical management and administrative competence. The best four were further subjected to oral interaction with two consultants. This year marks the first award in this category.

Mr. Chairman, Respected Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, these winners will be presented for award of prizes at the appropriate time during this programme. I also wish to state that the screening process and the written and oral interactions were handled according to preset rules and procedures with transparency and integrity. The expert examiners were carefully selected consultants from the academia and the public sector. We need to commend the excellent job done by these resource persons.

Our Appreciation

On behalf of the Award Committee, I wish to appreciate the Founder and Board of Trustees of the Inoyo Toro Foundation for this vision and their continuous commitment to this noble project, which has impacted positively in the performance of some of our students in public examinations. Some of these beneficiaries are now graduates in various fields of study. The Board deserves our commendation and thanks for this platform for service.

We profoundly thank his Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel, for his government's investment in education at all levels in the State and commitment to the Foundation's project. We appreciate the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Barr. Onofiok Luke, for the open door he extended to us and for always identifying with the Foundation over the years. We are grateful to the Hon. Commissioner for Education and the Permanent Secretary as well as the State Secondary Education Board. We also thank principals of schools for their support, which led to a smooth selection process during the year. The Foundation is also grateful to the Consultants for setting, administering and marking the aptitude test *in situ* and with integrity.

Conclusion

We are currently noticing some decline in the performance of some of the teachers in some of the subjects under consideration. Our public schools are also not performing up to expectation because of the non-commitment of some of the teachers. The school authorities and educational managers should sit up, raise the tempo of the school and cause teachers to be conscientious and diligent in their duties. Our teachers should note that:

The future of the world is in their classrooms today and that according to Albert Einstein, Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.

I congratulate you for being teachers and mentors of Akwa Ibom youths, the future leaders of our State and nation. Please teach them to learn by creating curiosity, so that they will continue the learning process as long as they live.

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 teachers as well as our Foundation's external mentors who have themselves made their mark in the society. 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 everyone!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua