

**Welcome Address by the Chairman, Award Committee of
Inoyo Toro Foundation, at the 12th Teachers' Award for Excellence,
Held at Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, Uyo, on
Friday, November 08, 2019.**

I feel honoured to welcome you, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Award Committee of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, to this Twelfth Award Ceremony of the Foundation. As usual, the purpose of this annual event is to appreciate our teachers and public school principals who have excelled during the year in the prime profession of teaching. For the benefit of those who are attending this programme for the first time, the main aims and objectives 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 professional backgrounds.

For the past twelve years, the Foundation has been striving to supplement the effort of the Akwa Ibom State Government in her educational development. We have had to appraise the whole education architecture in the State, with particular attention to public secondary schools, in order to proffer to government concrete suggestions on infrastructural, curriculum and personnel needs, in order to move the sector to some appreciable level of advancement. This is our main preoccupation and concern as a Foundation. We identified with the State Government as she hosted the first ever comprehensive State Education Summit and Exhibition, this year. With this, we have the hope that adequate attention will be paid to the Education sector in the State subsequently.

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. This motivation can include an annual mandatory professional development seminar that can be held during the long vacation period which the Foundation is poised to anchor if there is sponsorship. Government

can also facilitate in-service training programmes for teachers. These will facilitate the updating of their professional and academic competence to meet the 21st century challenges. A Chinese proverb states that, *“to teach our children in the way we were taught, prepares them for the past, not for the future”*. Therefore, teachers need regular updating of their knowledge and rebranding for effectiveness and relevance in this technological age.

This year the Foundation’s Award is for seven (7) subjects: English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics and History. In each subject the first prize winner receives ₦250,000; the second, ₦150,000 and the third ₦100,000.

In order to expand the participation of teachers in the Foundation’s activities, application forms were designed and sent to the over 200 public secondary schools in the State. A total of 706 teachers of various subjects responded. 384 met the set requirements for participation and were accordingly invited. 9 mentors, 38 mentees and 7 school principals were also invited to the screening. However, only 239 teachers, made up of 56 English, 38 Mathematics, 36 Biology, 39 Chemistry, 30 Physics, 36 Economics; and 4 History teachers, as well as seven (7) secondary school principals, attended the screening test.

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 (with not less than 40%) in the written test.

In order to strengthen the value of the award, the first, second and third prizes can only be achieved 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 Mathematics, this year. Visual Art had no sponsorship this year and so the test could not be executed even though some teachers had been shortlisted.

In the Grand Mentor Teachers’ Award category, the mentor must himself scale through the written test (at least 50%), in addition to his field performance indices, 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, three (3) were successful each in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. There are no grand mentors in Mathematics and English this year, as no mentor could scale the initial requirements in the screening test.

The **Principal’s Award** is aimed at rewarding the efforts of exceptional public school heads, who have distinguished themselves in pushing the academic

advancement of their institutions. The Foundation Team visited ten shortlisted principals to appraise their submission using well-articulated performance indices. This year, only seven (7) of them scaled through that hurdle with different scores and were subsequently invited to the screening test, where consideration was given to practical management and administrative competence. The three highest scorers (50% and above) in the test were further subjected to oral interaction after which the best principal emerged.

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

Your Excellency, Chairman of the occasion, Respected Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, these winners will be presented for award of prizes at the appropriate time during this programme.

Our Appreciation

On behalf of the Award Screening 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.

We profoundly appreciate his Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel, for his passion for the proper education of the Akwa Ibom child, through the provision of basic infrastructure and the recruitment of teachers. Government's sponsorship of the Education Summit is a strong testimony of this passion. We hope the outcome of that event will be passionately implemented. We are grateful to the Hon. Commissioner for Education and the Permanent Secretary, as well as the State Secondary Education Board, for providing the needed data on schools and facilitating our entry to schools. We are grateful to 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 their honest and selfless services to the Foundation. We thank all our collaborators and sponsors.

Conclusion

It is observed that our public schools are not performing optimally, primarily due to non-commitment of some of our teachers and school heads. Some school heads are scarcely found at their duty posts on time! This shows irresponsibility and clear lack

of commitment. The supervising government departments (the Ministry and relevant Boards) should strengthen their machinery for proper and effective supervision and honest appraisal of all sectors of the school system. Teachers should note that our children would excel to whatever height in their academics if given the proper mentoring by their teachers. Please create curiosity as you teach so that they will continue the learning process as long as they live and so actualize their dreams.

I also wish to urge the students who are present in this programme, not to be distracted by myriads of today's youthful enticements and crazy preoccupations but to take your studies seriously. Boldly take hold of your future and do not settle for mediocrity. The Bible instructs, *Study to show yourself approved unto God, so you won't need to be ashamed in future.* Studying facilitates deeper understanding. 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, as I congratulate you on your success. You should realize that this is the beginning of a new journey in the mentorship enterprise. There is a lot more work to do now to prove your worth and maximize your potential. This award provides an open door to other numerous opportunities. Take hold of these squarely!

I congratulate every winner and welcome all to this event! Please make yourself comfortable and be part of the Foundation's noble agenda.

May God bless everyone!

Thank you!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua
Chairman