

**Welcome Address by the Chairman, Award Screening Committee of
Inoyo Toro Foundation, at the 14th Teachers' (and 4th Principal's)
Award for Excellence, Held at Ibom e-Library, Uyo,
on Friday, November 05, 2021.**

I feel delighted to welcome you, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Award Screening Committee of the Inoyo Toro Foundation, to this unique Award Ceremony of the Foundation. Unique in the sense that for the first time in the history of these Award ceremonies, we shall have a larger virtual audience and a limited physical audience. As usual, the purpose of this annual event is to appreciate our teachers and public school principals who have excelled during the year in this prime profession of teaching. Last year, we did not have a formal ceremony due to the COVID-19 schools lock down. This year, our theme for this programme is ***Recapturing Societal Values*** and aptly fits with the theme of the 2021 World Teacher's Day, ***Teachers at the Heart of Education Recovery***. We are hopeful that we can recapture and recover our lost values as we address genuinely and proactively our education issues.

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 fourteen 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 framework in the State, in order to proffer to government concrete suggestions on infrastructural, curriculum and personnel needs, which could 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, in 2019. Shortly after that, we were also part of the painstaking report of the Akwa Ibom State Think Tank Committee on Education, inaugurated by His Excellency, Governor Udom Emmanuel in 2020. This Committee, headed by the world-renowned and distinguished Professor Hilary Inyang, produced the very detailed and well-articulated Akwa Ibom

Education Roadmap for the next 10 years. The Governor being passionate about the rejuvenation of the education sector had approved the document and has started implementing some aspects of the report of the Roadmap.

The Foundation believes that teacher motivation and appreciation are 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 (MPD) seminar that can be held during the long vacation period which the Foundation is poised to anchor if there is sponsorship. The incentives recently announced for teachers by the Federal Government can also be considered by the State Government. Government can also facilitate in-service training programmes for teachers. These will update the teacher's professional and academic competence to enable them face modern challenges.

The Foundation's Award, this year, is for six (6) subjects: English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Economics. In each subject the first prize winner receives ₦250,000; the second, ₦150,000 and the third ₦100,000.

This year we departed from the past routine and invited online applications from interested teachers, via the Foundation's website. A total of 197 teachers, 20 mentors and 11 school principals applied. Out of these 186 teachers, 20 mentors and 8 school principals met the set requirements for participation and were accordingly invited. However, only 162 teachers, made up of 15 English, 37 Mathematics, 39 Biology, 32 Chemistry, 30 Physics, and 9 Economics teachers took part in the screening tests, which were computer based, under supervision. This response is low compared to the figures in 2019, perhaps due to lack of exposure to ICT. One of the applicants who was discovered to be fraudulent was disqualified and asked to write an open apology which he published in a national daily.

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 first prizes in Biology and Chemistry, this year.

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. Besides, at least one of the mentees

of the candidate should be a prize-winner in the year. The Grand Mentor award attracts ₦500, 000. This year we have five (5) grand mentors each in Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematics and Physics.

The **Principal's Award**, which came on board our stable in 2017, is aimed at rewarding the efforts of exceptional public school heads, who have distinguished themselves in pushing the academic and administrative advancement of their institutions, by providing a congenial environment for study. The Foundation Team visited eight shortlisted principals (from the three Senatorial districts in the State) to appraise their submission using well-articulated performance indices. Only seven (7) of them appeared this year for the screening test, where consideration was given to practical management and administrative principles. The three highest scorers (50% and above) in the test were further subjected to oral interaction after which the best principal emerged. This year we have the fourth winner in this category.

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.

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

Our Appreciation

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 recent recruitment of teachers for schools. Government's gradual implementation of the provisions of the Education Roadmap is a strong testimony to this passion. 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. We thank all our collaborators and sponsors.

I wish to appreciate the Advisor, Chairperson and members of the 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 Foundation is also

grateful to our very experienced Consultants, viz, Dr. Happiness Uduk and Dr. Juliet Udoudom (English); Dr. Nsima Udoidung and Dr. Felix Ogbemudia (Biology); Dr. Imaobong Udousoro and Dr. Inni Umoren (Chemistry); Mr. Enobong Umobong (Economics); Prof Godfrey Akpabio and Prof Louis Akpabio (Physics); Prof Mfoniso Umoren and Dr. Enobong Joshua (Mathematics); and Mr. Ekanabasi Ubong (a retired Permanent Secretary); for their honest, diligent and selfless services to the Foundation. These experts worked with the Screening Committee (which includes Mr. Joseph Udoh, Mrs Lydia Nkan and the Staff) to determine the winners this year.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to draw the attention of our dear teachers to the fact 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 not to be distracted by myriads of today's youthful enticements and crazy preoccupations but to take their studies seriously. Boldly take hold of your future and do not settle for mediocrity. The Bible instructs, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to 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. Students, don't fit in when you can stand out!

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. You need to do more work now to prove your worth and maximize your potential. This award provides a spring board to other numerous opportunities. Take hold of these squarely!

I hereby welcome everyone to this event! Please make yourself comfortable and be part of the Foundation's noble and destiny transforming agenda.

May God bless everyone!

Thank you!

Dr. Enobong E. Joshua
Chairman