

Perception of Fisheries Students of Niger Delta University to Fisheries as a Profession

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Abstract

A narrative study on the perception of the Fisheries Students in the Niger Delta University on their course of study and their expectation about the profession was carried out. A normative selection of respondents was done and 50 questionnaires successfully administered irrespective of the student' level of study. The credits obtained at Secondary School Certificate examination had the highest point of what determined the choice of study. Although, 54% of the respondents did not initially chose Fisheries as a course of study, the highest point of 4.44 ± 0.95 on a scale of 5 showed they have great expectations about the profession and perceived that it is a promising profession. The role of the Professionals should be to encourage recruitment to sustain the profession with the collaborative efforts on the part of the Government.

Keywords: Fisheries, Skill Development, Education, Social Perception

Introduction

Human development index (HDI) for Nigeria is 0.459 and ranks 159 out of 187 countries in the world. Nigeria is still below the regional average of 0.463 of the sub Saharan African as presented by the Executive secretary of National University Commission and reported by Emine (2012). Therefore, the under-development of human resources in the country is not limited to the Fisheries sector alone. It is an established fact that training and development of human resources must include changes in skills, knowledge and or social behaviour. Meanwhile, development embraces social, political, cultural, religious, technological, educational and economic advancement. According to Angaye (1994) development should be seen as improvement in the material, physical, mental, spiritual and moral quality of life, resulting in rising incomes, reduction or eradication of poverty, reduction in unemployment and unjustified

inequalities, provision of better food, shelter, health, education and protection, high self esteem or respect, increased freedom of choice and ability to determine one's destiny. Going by all these definitions of human development, one has the right to choose a course of career that satisfy and complement one's temperament. But challenges arises in such situations for career choice making intakes into courses like Fisheries as also observed by Oku(2006) for Education courses, that candidates were admitted into such courses because they could not be admitted to pursue their choice of study, therefore, exhibiting an unappreciable attitude towards their profession. In order to sustain recruitment and retaining professionals in natural resources field, an adequate supply of well- trained workforce is required for the future of the natural resource profession. This was observed by the coalition of natural resource societies (CNRS) (Atkins, 2011). A fisheries professional is an individual with specialized education in the services and technologies involving the structure, dynamics and interactions of habitats, aquatic organisms and humans. AFS (2013) while Royce (1985) gave the three kinds of fisheries based on social dimension as recreational fisheries, commercial fisheries and fish farming, although in the country more is known about fish farming in comparison to commercial or recreational fisheries.

Materials and Methods

Questionnaires were purposely administered to students who were registered as Fisheries major in the Faculty of Agricultural Technology in the Niger Delta University during the 2012/2013 academic session. Fifty questionnaires were successfully administered irrespective of the students' level of study. The questions on criteria for choosing Fisheries and perceptions about the course were ranked on a score of five (5-strongly agreed to 1-I don't know), all other questions were open ended. Results were analysed with simple means and standard deviation from the obtained values, these were used to describe the criteria for choosing Fisheries as a course of study and perception of the students about Fisheries as a profession. Frequency and percentages were used to describe expectations of respondents about the Fisheries profession.

Results and Discussion

The data analysed were suggestive of the students' characteristics and perception about Fisheries as a course of study and profession. The respondents were made up of 18% graduate students, 30% final year (500 levels) students, 28% 400 level students, 4% 300level students, 1 6% 200level students and 4% 100 level students. On the whole 72% of these respondents attended Government Secondary Schools and 88% were from Bayelsa State as

shown in Table 1, the age range is between 16-35 years old and 94% are single. On a score of 5 for strongly agreed a mean of 4.42 with standard deviation of 0.97 was obtained for the ability of students to make six credits at a sitting at senior secondary school examination as what influenced their admission to study Fisheries as shown in Table 2. Fisheries may not have been a popular choice of prospective University students with basic science background but the limit set by admission requirements will be the net to catch available entrants into the course and eventually the profession. The respondents believed it is a promising profession and they have great expectations as shown in Table 3. The value of 4.44 ± 0.95 on a scale of 5 was obtained for the student's perception that they have great expectation about the profession, this is promising for the profession, what ever is being done by professionals now should be encouraged to continue as Kalin (2012) put it that we are assimilated into the context of practise, once our actions and thoughts processes become natural even though they are socially and culturally constructed.

Although, Fisheries may not be an everyday profession but lately it has enjoyed publicity of some sort from successful investors and motivators projecting aquaculture as a viable and profitable business. All other aspects of Fisheries is yet hidden and seem technical because according to Pardy et al., (2006), Agricultural Research and Development is a slow business hence benefits manifest over some time.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents (Fisheries Students of Niger Delta University)

| Character | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| State of Origin | | |
| Bayelsa | 44 | 88 |
| Rivers | 5 | 10 |
| Imo | 1 | 2 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 30 | 60 |
| Female | 20 | 40 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 47 | 94 |
| Married | 3 | 6 |
| Secondary School Attended | | |
| Private | 14 | 28 |
| Government | 36 | 72 |
| Age | | |
| 16-20 | 7 | 14 |
| 21-25 | 21 | 42 |
| 26-30 | 20 | 40 |
| 31-35 | 2 | 4 |
| Level of Study | | |
| 100 level | 2 | 4 |
| 200 " | 8 | 16 |
| 300 " | 2 | 4 |
| 400 " | 14 | 28 |
| 500 " | 15 | 30 |
| Graduate Students | 9 | 18 |

Table 2: What influenced the Choice of Student to study Fisheries

| S/N | Criteria | Score \pm SD |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| 1. | I made 6 credits at one sitting for SSCE | 4.42 \pm 0.97 |
| 2. | My personal choice | 3.50 \pm 1.18 |
| 3. | Inability to be admitted for other courses | 3.40 \pm 1.28 |
| 4. | My UMTE Scores | 3.34 \pm 1.20 |
| 5. | Influence of my Parents | 3.28 \pm 1.14 |
| 6. | Closeness of University | 3.08 \pm 1.10 |
| 7. | Fund Availability | 3.00 \pm 1.20 |
| 8. | SSCE subjects | 2.94 \pm 1.06 |
| 9. | Influence of Friends | 2.90 \pm 1.02 |
| 10. | I made 6 credits at more than one sittings for SSCE | 2.80 \pm 1.50 |
| 11. | Counselling from my Secondary School | 2.64 \pm 0.87 |

Table 3: Perception of Students to the Fisheries Profession

| S/N | Perception | Score \pm SD |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| 1 | I have great expectations concerning the profession | 4.44 \pm 0.95 |
| 2 | It is a promising profession | 4.44 \pm 0.86 |
| 3 | I intend to practice in the future | 3.92 \pm 1.38 |
| 4 | Public perception about the profession is negative | 3.66 \pm 1.24 |
| 5 | Somebody Influence my choice to study Fisheries | 3.28 \pm 1.11 |
| 6 | I chose to study Fisheries on my own | 3.12 \pm 1.21 |
| 7 | I am not interested in the profession | 2.72 \pm 0.83 |
| 8 | I wish to divert or change to another profession | 2.60 \pm 0.90 |

Majority of respondents (54%) as shown in Table 4, may have shown repulsion for the course at admission because of negative public perception as shown in Table 5 for reasons why students do not chose Fisheries, 28% of the respondents gave negative public perception as reason especially in Bayelsa state which is predominantly a wet land with every day activities about Fish and Fisheries. Lack of information is a close reason at 14%, the ordinary illiterate

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fisherman may think his ward may be admitted into the University to study what he already knows without going to school. Some respondents showed their level of knowledge either by coercion or willingly by choosing Fisheries with a record of 22% as shown in Table 6 while the remaining 64% would have preferred other courses; only 14% had no idea which course they would have preferred.

Table 4: Reasons for Choosing Fisheries as a Course of Study

| | Reasons | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Not my choice | 27 | 54 |
| | Interest in agriculture | 5 | 10 |
| | Future Prospects | 7 | 14 |
| | Self Employment Capability | 9 | 18 |
| | Curiosity | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 5: Why Students do not Choose Fisheries as a Course of Study

| | Reasons | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Not well publicized | 5 | 10 |
| 2 | Lack of Information | 7 | 14 |
| 3 | Negative Public Perception | 14 | 28 |
| 4 | Slothfulness | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | Ignorance | 5 | 10 |
| 6 | Fear of Job Opportunity | 5 | 10 |
| 7 | No idea | 13 | 26 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 6: Preferred Course of Study

| | Courses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Fisheries | 11 | 22 |
| | Nursing | 9 | 18 |
| | Medicine/Medical Laboratory Tech | 7 | 14 |
| | Mathematics | 1 | 2 |
| | Engineering | 9 | 18 |
| | Pharmacy | 2 | 4 |
| | Mass Communication | 1 | 2 |
| | Geology | 2 | 4 |
| | Biological Science | 1 | 2 |
| | No idea | 7 | 14 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

According to Baydack (2009) enrolment in traditional natural resources programme at undergraduate and graduate levels reached its peak in the mid 1990's and has been declining since with concomitant increase in enrolment for environmental science signifying possible name change as the key. This name change was advocated for in this study by the respondents in Table.7 Government encouragement is also required as shown in Table 7 on how to attract enrolment. Only 34% of the respondents were certain of going into private practice as shown in Table 8 which is a very laudable option. Also the favoured area of specialization from this study as shown in Table 9 is aquaculture(38%), this may boiled down to lack of information about the hidden specialities that characterise Fisheries profession. These observations certainly require the professionals to intervene in a pragmatic and vital way, although it requires collective efforts. As Atkins(2011) also enumerated on solutions to attracting enrolment into Natural Resources education, that Budget constraints on the part of Government should be looked into to favour research and the application to solve real world problems which is food, shelter and employment which are all related to natural resources. Appealing to youth psychology about active stewardship about natural resources, developing technical and entrepreneurial skills which are required in the labour market, this will help in putting to silence the fear of unemployment after graduation. Crawford et al., (2011) also emphasized the needs of recruits into the employment world, to be technical and people skills especially communication skills.

Table 7 : How to attract Enrolment into the Fisheries Programme

| Means of Attraction | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| Enlightenment from professionals | 10 | 20 |
| Encouragement from Government | 5 | 10 |
| Orientation at Primary and Secondary Schools | 3 | 6 |
| Change of name to something attractive | 8 | 16 |
| Improve packaging | 5 | 10 |
| Appeal to youth psychology | 7 | 14 |
| No idea | 12 | 24 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 8: Future Choice of Employment in the Fisheries Sector

| | Choice of Employment | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Private(Self Employment) | 17 | 34 |
| | Government | 10 | 20 |
| | Anyone | 20 | 40 |
| | No idea | 3 | 6 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

Table 9: Expected Area of Specialization in the Fisheries Profession

| | Specialization | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Aquaculture | 19 | 38 |
| | Feed Production | 3 | 6 |
| | Environmental/ Hydrobiology | 5 | 10 |
| | Deep Sea Fisheries/Oceanography | 5 | 10 |
| | Marketing | 1 | 2 |
| | Ornamental Fisheries | 1 | 2 |
| | Breeding and Genetics | 8 | 16 |
| | No idea | 8 | 16 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

Conclusion

Fisheries Students of the Niger Delta University have great expectation about the fisheries profession, yet more ought to be done. Investments need to be made in agricultural higher education to strengthen human resource capacity. This must be coupled with a detailed capacity needs assessment, strong commitment of senior managers, involvement of employers in supplying the missing skills through in-service training and getting students representation in the power structure of professional bodies for instance as suggested by Atkins(2011) as student liaisons or advisors on governing boards of society, so they can have a sense of belonging and hence, remove the fear of limited job possibilities. Student advisors should endeavour to assist the growth of new fisheries professionals by maintaining a cordial relationship to faster recruitment and protect our profession.

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