

ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO FORESTRY AS A PROFESSION IN IGABI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitude of secondary school students to forestry as a profession in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Five schools were randomly selected and twenty students randomly chosen in each school for questionnaire administration. 100% of the questionnaire distributed was returned. The findings revealed among others that if the respondents were reinforced with the award of scholarship to study forestry in the higher institution, higher percentage would like to study. Since Forestry profession still requires professionals trained on the job, it follows that interest in the profession should be stimulated right from secondary school levels. Based on this, the study recommended that Governments, Individuals, public and private organizations, NGOs and many others should encourage the students by awarding scholarships to those who intend to study forestry as a profession.

Keywords: secondary students, attitude, scholarship, forestry profession.

INTRODUCTION

For participation in forestry to achieve the desired goal which could be sustained in perpetuity, the deep involvement of students in general is inevitable. In terms of gender, both males and females are almost equally represented as students. The diversity in their upbringing makes it more imperative to expose them to the management of the principal source of some of their basic requirements and the role of forests in the management of their environment for their welfare and conducive living. Students are in their formative stages and thus very 'flexible'.

In most cases, students are easily prepared to imbibe new ideas and principles of existence. Once students get used to particular ideology, they often stick to it (Ajayi and Gbile, 1995). Before students could be used to propagate any new concept of idea, they need to be convinced, educated and enlightened. If students are well informed, they can be counted as agents of change (Ajayi and Gbile, 1995). Despite the prospect and importance of forestry, in any nation's socio-economic development, years of neglect of this course by students' have left very huge gaps in producing enough managers for Nigeria forests.

Today's forestry policies put high demands on forestry which is working for sustainable production of a good environment. The adage that no single tree can make a forest goes to prove beyond reasonable doubt that to attain greater height in forestry today, all human resources available must be utilized. Students' thinking is needed in all areas. The secondary school students who are full of in built abilities yet to be fully utilized are needed particularly in forestry activities where nature conservation has to be balance with the production of timber and self reliance is really enhanced.

Discussing forestry is as good as discussing agriculture since it is a syndicate of agriculture. Some aspects of agriculture like fisheries, crop science among others have gained popularity than forestry possibly due to poor attitude of people to it or because of little or no chances of employment opportunities for forestry

graduates in Nigeria. There is therefore the need to examine the perception and attitude of secondary school students towards forestry as a profession (Adu et al, 2002). Meeting the needs of man, such as food, water, health, energy and housing depends significantly on the way forests resources are managed and this is based on the fact that forests are the main body of the terrestrial ecological system and is a fundamental basic resource (Jarne and Santiago, 1997; Adu et al, 2002). Despite the fact that man depends so much on forest products, the forest is fast declining at an alarming rate due to the pressure on it (Adu and Ojo, 2001). The involvement of secondary school students' forest activities is an approach to spreading of forestry issues and enhancing the continuity of community participation, especially students in forestry activities. This paper however, examines the attitude of secondary school students toward forestry as a profession in Igabi local government area, Kaduna.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Igabi Local Government area of Kaduna State, which is located in the Guinea Savannah zone of Nigeria on Latitude 10^o37'N and Longitude 7^o 17'E. The Local Government has a total population of 375,514 (NPC, 2003). Five secondary schools were randomly selected from the local government. Twenty students each was randomly selected for questionnaire administration. A total of one hundred students were selected.

Questionnaire and oral interviews were used to collect data. The questionnaire that was used in collecting data for this study was a two-section open ended and structured questionnaire. The first section was designed to collect data on personal characteristics. The second section has items solely on the indicators of the variables (attitude of secondary school students and forestry as a profession) under investigation. The question was clearly defined with the described responses as either "Yes" or "No". Respondents were

asked to tick the appropriate box, which reflected his or her candid choice. The statistical methods that were used in analyzing the data include frequency tables and percentage. The research hypothesis was tested using chi-square statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 1 revealed that there is almost equal number (gender) of students selected for the survey. Youths are strongly believed to be mothers, fathers and leaders of tomorrow. They are expected to naturally take over the affairs of the society they find themselves. At the initial stage of development, youths learn to imitate the elders, followed by the phase of taken initiatives and risks towards the end of life journey, they impact knowledge and communicate life experiences to those behind them. Hence, any programmes that take cognizance of the youths will surely exhibit continuity, wide coverage and general acceptability (Ajayi and Gbile, 1995).

Table 2: Parental educational level (father)

Educational level	Frequency	%
HND/B.Sc/M.Sc/Ph.D	30	30
ND/NCE	18	18
Secondary School Certificate	20	20
Primary School Certificate	5	5
No Formal Education	27	27
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 2 revealed that more than one quarter of the respondents' parents have Higher National Diploma and above, this is followed by no formal education, secondary certificates and the least is primary school certificates. Parental educational level may have influence on students' career choice.

Table 3: Parental occupational level

Occupational level	Frequency	%
Civil servant	38	38
Trader	30	30
Farmer	20	20
Private Establishment	12	12
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 3 revealed the occupational level of the students' parents. The parents were civil servants in one government ministries or another, this is followed by traders, farmers and working with private establishments. The parents' occupational level could influence their wards career choice.

Table 4: Information on Forestry as a profession

Have you heard of forestry before?	Frequency	%
Yes	95	95
No	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 4 revealed that almost all the respondents were aware of forestry as a profession

Table 5: Channel of Information about Forestry

Channel	Frequency	%
Radio	5	4.1
Television	10	8.2
Newspaper	1	1.0
Family members	13	10.6

Teachers	75	61.4
Neighbours/friends	18	14.7
Total	122*	100

* Multiple choices

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 5 indicates that majority of the respondents became aware of forestry through their teachers, followed by those who got their awareness through their neighbours. The least corresponds to those who got their awareness through the newspaper.

Table 6: Courses preferred by respondents without reinforcement (award of scholarship)

Courses preferred	Frequency	%
Forestry	13	13
Medicine	40	40
Engineering	15	15
Education	1	1
Law	31	31
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 6 revealed that without any reinforcement such as the award of scholarship, the respondents were willing to study Forestry in the higher institution. However, most of the students would like to study medicine; this is followed by those who preferred to study law. Surprisingly, an insignificant number indicated that they would like to study education.

Table 7: Willingness to study forestry in the higher institution with reinforcement (Scholarship)

Study forestry with scholarship	Frequency	%
Yes	48	48
No	52	52
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 7 revealed that almost a half of the students would like to study forestry in the higher institution if they were given scholarship while some of the students strongly detest forestry, that even if they were offered scholarship, they would not study it.

Table 8: Students’ perception of the future of forestry as profession

How do you considered forestry as profession?	Frequency	%
The future is bright	45	45
The future is not bright	23	23
I can’t say	32	32
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 8 revealed that the students perceived that the future of the profession in Nigeria is bright while some believed that the future is not bright. However, more than one quarter of the respondents were neutral.

Table 9: Students’ perception of reasons why forestry profession is not competitive in Nigeria like other profession.

Reasons	Frequency	%
The course is not popular	52	47.3
Students who have no money	0	0
It is only for dull students	0	0
Students with no alternative	18	16.3
No job after study	40	46
Total	110*	100

*Source: Fieldwork, 2009 * Multiple choices*

Table 9 revealed that more than half of the respondents believed that the profession is not popular in Nigeria may be because no publicity as to what opportunities are there fo a graduate of forestry, while some of the respondents see the profession as that of students who have no alternative and indicated that those who study the course in the higher institution will not get job in the labour market.

Table 10: Government action to promote forestry as a profession

Government action	Frequency	%
Forestry subjects in school curriculum.	32	26.7
Awareness on television and radio	15	12.5
Job availability for forestry graduates	73	60.8
Total	120*	100

*Source: Fieldwork, 2009. * Multiple choices*

Table 10 showed that majority of the respondents agreed that government can promote forestry as a profession by making job available for those who study it. This is followed by students who agreed that pure forestry subjects be included in the school curriculum. The least number agreed that government can create more awareness on radio and television.

Table 11: Marriage to someone who studied forestry

Married to a forester	Frequency	%
Yes	63	63
No	37	37
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 11 revealed that most of the students would like to marry someone who studied forestry while others indicated that they would never marry whoever studies forestry. This may be due to the fear of anticipating inability to secure job in the labour market.

Table 12: Chi-square test of gender studying forestry with scholarship

	Value	Df A	Symp Sig
Pearson chi-square	3.558	1	0.059**
Continuity correction	2.464	1	0.117**
Likelihood ratio	3.610	1	0.057**
Linear-by-linear association	3.469	1	0.063**
N of valid class	100		

** Not significant at 0.05

The chi-square in table 12 revealed that the award of scholarship by government to reinforce students has no significant influence ($p>0.05$) on the study of forestry. This showed the level of hatred that some students manifest towards choosing forestry as a course of study, despite the fact that with scholarship, they would not just study forestry.

Table 13: Chi-square test of parents' educational level and course liked to study

	Value	DfA	AsymSig
Pearson chi-square	12.299	12	0.422 **
Likelihood ratio	12.644	12	0.395**
Linear-by-linear association	2.225	1	0.136**
N of valid class	100		

** *Not significant at 0.05*

The chi-square in table 13 revealed that parents' educational level has no significant relationship ($p>0.05$) with the choice of courses to study in the higher institution. This showed that parents' educational level does not determine the career choice of their wards.

Table 14: Chi-square of gender and the future of forestry profession

	Value	Df	Asym Sig
Pearson chi-square	10.332	2	0.006*
Likelihood ratio	10.958	2	0.004*
Linear-by-linear association	7.021	1	0.008*
N of valid class	100		

**significant at 0.05*

The chi-square in table 14 revealed that there is significant relationship ($p<0.05$) with forestry and bright future for the profession. This showed that whoever studies forestry will not regret it in the future. The study revealed that there were almost equal number of boys and girls that were randomly selected for the survey. The parents' educational levels do not have significant relationship ($p>0.05$) with the choice of career on the respondents. This showed

that whether the parents are highly educated or stack illiterates, does not affect the career choice of the respondents. The findings also showed that the parents' occupational level does not have significant relationship ($p>0.05$) with students' career choice. There have been cases where a typical farmer's ward became Medical doctor and Automobile Engineer while the wards of executive director preferred to engage in the business of contraband materials.

Although most of the respondents were fully aware of forestry as a profession, only very few of them are willing to study forestry without reinforcement of scholarship. While the majority of the respondents preferred to study medicine followed by Law. Surprisingly, the number of respondents that preferred to study Education were insignificant. This will have serious implication on teaching and learning processes in the nearest future as the respondents who should replaced the older generation have no interest in Education as a profession, hence the need for government to take action on our education. Most of the respondents were aware of forestry as a profession through their teachers in the school. This showed that the secondary school curriculum contain forestry in both the junior and senior secondary school level. The findings also revealed that negligible number of the respondents indicated that they received their awareness through the newspaper. This may be probably due to the fact that the respondents have very poor reading habits or that they don't have access to newspapers.

Interestingly, the findings revealed that if the respondents were reinforced with the award of scholarship to study forestry in the higher institution, higher percentage would like to study it, compared with those who were willing to study it without scholarship. Most of the respondents see the future of forestry profession to be bright while most of the respondents agreed that the profession is not popular. Most of the respondents would like government to make job available for those who studied forestry. Also, the respondents have passion for forestry as most of the respondents would like to marry those who study forestry in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to evaluate the attitude of secondary school students to forestry as a profession in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The secondary school students full of in-built abilities yet to be fully utilized are needed particularly in forestry activities where nature conservation has to be balanced with the production of timber and self reliance, hence, the need to examine the attitude of secondary school students towards forestry as a profession. Therefore, the study recommends that: Governments, Individuals, public and private organizations, NGOs and many others should encourage the students by awarding scholarships to those who intend to study forestry as a profession. Also, graduates of forestry should be empowered to be self reliant. Parents should not force their wards against their choice of career. This will make the students devote to the career of their choice which in turn enhances their ultimate success.

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