

# **FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' CHOICE OF PROGRAMMES IN THE FACULTY OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, NYANKPALA CAMPUS - GHANA**

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## **Abstract**

*Since its establishment in 2009/10 academic year, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment (FNRE) of the University for Development Studies, Ghana has not been able to meet the set target of student enrolment. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the factors affecting students' choice of programmes in the Faculty. The study population was comprising 300 students and 34 staff. Factor analysis of ratings of importance of five or six variable characteristics yielded dimensions upon which student decisions are based. These are the academic reputation of the institution, programme quality and size, cost of the programme, financial aid, geographical location, contact with faculty, and students' individual characteristics such as academic ability and achievement. The determining rates of the responses to questions posed were Strongly agreed (5): Agreed (4), Not Sure (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree(1). The results were used to build five scales of importance and preference, which were then tested with other variables in a regression model in which the dependent variable was the decision to enroll or not to enroll at the surveying Faculty. The study found that the following factors influenced students' decisions to enroll in the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment: residency status, quality and other academic environment characteristics, work-related concerns, spouse considerations, financial aid, the academic reputation of the programmes offered, comparison of academic programmes, the availability of effective tutoring services, the availability of academic advisory/counseling services, knowledge of career progression after completion, the opportunities to study abroad after graduation, the proximity of the institution to students' home, the prospects of getting a job after completion and the cost of pursuing the programmes.*

*Keywords: Programme choice, student enrolment, programme, admission, higher education*

## INTRODUCTION

Universities and other tertiary institutions all over the world compete for qualified students. The contest has become keener in the face of the fact that many universities have moved away from providing on-campus tuition to assume virtual universities status through the deployment of technology. It has been argued that the status of Universities is based on the number of students admitted. It is in light of this that Kallio (1995), explained that amongst the factors influencing higher educational choice 'decisions of students are affected by some of the same factors that influence students in their selection of an undergraduate college namely: the academic reputation of the institution, programme quality and size, price/cost, financial aid, geographical location, contact with faculty, and a students' individual characteristics such as academic ability and achievement.' The high number of students admitted into a University helps to boost the finances of the University for effective delivery of academic programmes and other metropolitan services.

He further indicated that 'students are affected simultaneously by their perceptions of the importance of an item, and the preferred institution on it.' He also noted that the importance of academic environment factors such as the reputation and quality of the institution and its programmes among others, influence students' decision to enroll in the University.

It has been generally observed by the entire University community (staff and students) that name of the Faculty could be one of the factors that brings about decrease of admission numbers of students. . Another factor the researcher observed could be the caliber of teaching staff in the Faculty. Faculty must be more experienced teaching in order to enhance the image of the Faculty and to attract more students.

Account should therefore be taken about students' concerns about the quality of the institution and of the particular department or programme of study. There is the need to interview potential students and those who are currently enrolled in the department's programmes in a bid to ascertain the causes of low admission intake in the faculty or department.

Students normally consider the relevance of academic qualification as a key factor in order to secure high-paying employment (Dadigamuwa and Senanayake (2012).The need to study the important attributes especially institutional factors that affect students' college choice decision in higher education institutions has become imperative for marketing strategy planning for students' recruitment of higher educational institutions (Joseph and Joseph, 2000).

The University for Development Studies (UDS) has over the years experienced a sustained decline in the number of prospective applicants applying for admission. Though, a university-wide problem, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment is the most affected

in terms of the decline in student numbers. The worrying trend of reduction in students' admission into the Faculty started in 2010/2011 academic year.

The Benneh Task Force 1991 was set up to prepare the programme of action for the implementation of the decision of the government to establish a University in the North of Ghana. The Task Force identified the gaps in the management of natural resources in Ghana and thus recommended the establishment of Department of Renewable Natural Resources to train the requisite manpower to manage these resources in a sustainable manner (BennehTask Force Report 1991). In line with the report, the Department of Renewable Natural Resources was established under the Faculty of Agriculture. Management of the University however saw the need to upscale the Department into a Faculty. Following this development the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources (FRNR) was later carved out of the Department of Renewable Natural Resources in 2009. The Faculty started academic work with an initial intake of 216 students which was above the projected number of 200 students. With this encouraging start, Management hoped to nurture the Faculty into one of academic excellence. It is surprising to note that the Faculty in subsequent years did not meet its target of students' intake. The Faculty is still grappling with the challenge with the situation growing from bad to worse. Student numbers have continued to reduce with very little hope of reversing the trend.

The increasing reluctance of students to choose science related courses and physical sciences courses in particular has grave implications for the future of scientific endeavour of present future generations.

### **Definition of Key Concepts**

A 'Choice' is the act of choosing. The act of picking or deciding between two or more possibilities. 'Choice' suggests the opportunity or privilege of choosing freely (*freedom of choice*). The synonyms of choice are - alternatives, discretion, election, liberty, option, pick, preference, selection, volition, way, etc (Merriam-Webmaster Dictionary).

Choice involves decision making. It can include judging the merits of multiple options and seeking one or more of them. One can make a choice between imagined options ("What would I do if...?") or between real options followed by the corresponding action. For example, a traveler might choose a route for a journey based on the preference of arriving at a given destination as soon as possible. The preferred (and therefore chosen) route can then follow from information such as the length of each of the possible routes, traffic conditions, etc. The arrival at a choice can include more complex motivators such as cognition, instinct, and feeling (Wikipedia).

The word 'renewable' comes from the word 'to renew', which means 'to make (something) new, fresh, or strong again. : to make (a promise, vow, etc.) again. : to begin (something) again especially with more force or enthusiasm'. The term also means to regenerate, to rebuild, to revive, replenish or replace something (Merriam-Webmaster Dictionary)

'Natural' on the other hand can be defined as 'existing in nature and not made or caused by people: coming from nature: not having any extra substances or chemicals added: not containing anything artificial: usual or expected.

The word 'resources' or resource can be explained as 'a source of supply, support, or aid, especially one that can be readily drawn upon when needed. Resources are the collective wealth of a country or its means of producing wealth. Usually, resources, money, or any property that can be converted into money; assets (www. Dictionary Dotcom)

'Natural resources occur naturally within environments that exist relatively undisturbed by humanity, in a natural form. A natural resource is often characterized by amounts of biodiversity and geodiversity existent in various ecosystems.'

Natural resources are derived from the environment. Some of them are essential for our survival while most are used for satisfying our needs. Natural resources may be further classified in different forms .

Natural resources are materials and components (something that can be used) that can be found within the environment. Every man-made product is composed of natural resources (at its fundamental level). A natural resource may exist as a separate entity such as fresh water, and air, as well as a living organism such as a fish, or it may exist in an alternate form which must be processed to obtain the resource such as metal ores, oil, and most forms of energy' (Wikipedia – Free Encyclopedia).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on college student decision-making have shown that students use economic and sociological theoretical frameworks to examine factors of college choice (Hearn, 1984; Jackson, 1978; Tierney, 1983; Somers, Haines, & Keene; 2006). These frameworks have been used to develop three theoretical and conceptual approaches to modeling college choice: (a) economic models, (b) status-attainment models, and (c) combined models.

Two different perspectives have emerged on students' decision to enroll for programme in an institution. One approach focuses on how to decide where to apply (Hearn, 1984). Geography also is a factor in determining where to attend public, in-state institutions residence (Niu &Tienda, 2008). The second approach also focuses on cost, size, distance, the quality of programmes, and factors most commonly associated with a comprehensive college choice,

student background characteristics (Jackson, 1982), aspirations (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, 1982), educational achievement (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), financial variables (St. John, 1990; 1991), net cost (Starkey, 1995), institutional climate (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler et al., 1989). Dreher Tvaara (2005) have suggested that economic and cultural forces play an important role in shaping the international students' migration markets. The second is the national level institution within countries. In Australia for example, it is found that the field of study preferences, course and institutional reputations, course entry, easy access to home and institutional characteristics are significant factors in students' choice of an institution. In addition, the teaching reputation of Universities for college students in England and their research profiles. Price Foskett et al. (2006) found that students consider more carefully economic and social factors as well as financial difficulties before choosing an institution. These factors include job opportunities to supplement their incomes, accommodation costs and family home proximity. Third, course of study decisions tend to be closely related to institutional choice decisions. James et al. (1999) identified a range of factors influencing course preference including: the reputation of the course among employers; graduate satisfaction from the course; graduate employment from the course; the quality of teaching in the course ; approaches to teaching the course including opportunities for flexible study.

Different perspectives to understanding the complex college have emerged. One approach focuses on how aspiring students to college decide where to apply considering the admission criteria to make their enrollment decisions). Geography also imposes constraints on college choices. The notion of state institutions implies that college options are circumscribed by state, Tienda, (2008). The second approach emphasizes institutional characteristics such as cost, size, distance, the quality of programmes, and availability of financial aid most commonly associated with a comprehensive college choice and student background characteristics (Jackson, 1982), aspirations (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, 1982), educational achievement (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Jackson, 1982), social environment & Gallagher, 1987), financial variables (St. John, 1990; 1991), net cost (Starkey, 1995), institutional climate (Chapman, 1984), and institutional characteristics (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler et al., 1989). The present study selected a framework for college choice that Somers, Haines, & Keene (2006) constructed for 2 college choice with eight factors.

Dreher and Tvaara (2005) have suggested that economic and cultural forces play an important role in national level discussions. In Australia, for example , James et al. course and institutional reputations, course entry institutional characteristics significantly influenced teaching reputation of universities has been done in their research profiles (Price , et al., Foskett et al. (2006) found that students consider more carefully economic factors and financial

difficulty. These factors include job opportunities to supplement their incomes, accommodation costs and family home proximity. Third, course of study decisions tend to be closely related to institutional choice decisions. James et al. (1999) indicated that the reputation of the course among employers; graduate satisfaction from the course; graduate employment rates; approaches to teaching, learning and to understanding the complex college selection decision which envelops students' college choice enrollment decisions. Most students' choice of college options are circumscribed by the state and institutional characteristics as well as the availability of financial aid. The most commonly associated factors with a comprehensive college choice model include students' background characteristics (Jackson, 1982), aspirations (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Jackson, 1982), social environment (Gallagher, 1987), financial variables (St. John, 1990; 1991). Two different perspectives have emerged. One approach focuses on how to decide where to apply (Hearn, 1984). Geography also imposes limitation on whether to attend public or in-state institutions residence (Niu & Tienda, 2008). The second approach such as cost, size, distance, the quality of programs, and factors most commonly associated with a comprehensive college choice student background characteristics (Jackson, 1982), aspirations (Chapman, 1984; Jackson, 1982), educational achievement (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), financial variables (St. John, 1990; 1991), net cost Starkey, 1995), institutional climate (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler et al., 1989). framework for college choice college choice with eight factors.

Students' decision-making process plays a major role in the global market. Dreher Tvaara (2005) have suggested that economic and cultural forces play in shaping the international students' migration markets Second, the national level institution within countries. In Australia, for example found that field of study preferences, course and institutional reputations, course entry easy access to home and institutional characteristics significantly influenced applicants' choice of institution. In addition, the teaching reputation of universities for college students in England than their research profiles (Price, et al., 2003). Foskett et al. (2006) found that students consider more carefully economic factors in times of distress and financial difficulty. These factors include job opportunities to supplement their incomes, accommodation costs and family home proximity. Third, course of study decisions tend to be closely related to institutional choice decisions. James et al.(1999) have identified a range of factors influencing course preference including: the reputation of the course among employers; graduate satisfaction from the course; graduate employment from the course; the quality of teaching in the course ; approaches to teaching, the course including opportunities for flexible study.

## **Problem Statement**

The perennial shortfall in the number of applications received from prospective applicants for admission into the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources gives a sign of imminent danger and bleak prospects of the future of the Faculty. The trend of dwindling number of applications received has compelled Management to admit students with science background who fail to obtain admission into their preferred programmes of choice. The obvious outcome has always been that many of such students' turndown the offer of admission. The few who out of frustration accept the offer given them sometimes report and ask for a change of programme. The Faculty has for several years not been able to meet its target in of students' admission.

This piece of research is designed to pry into the challenges that have accounted for the ever-dwindling number of prospective applicants seeking to gain admission into the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment and recommend measures to help improve the situation.

## **Research Questions**

1. What factors influence students' choice of programmes in the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment?
2. What measures have been taken to reach out to prospective applicants?
3. Are there differences in the perceptions of both students and teaching staff on the job prospects of students who pursue programmes in the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment?
4. What measures have been taken to market the Renewable Natural Resources programme?
5. In what ways can the programmes in the Faculty be repackaged to make them attractive to students?

## **Research Objectives**

The objective of the study has been categorized into two:

### *a) Main Objective*

The objective of the study is to investigate why the Faculty continues to receive low student turn out as compared to other faculties like the Faculty of Agriculture (FoA) and the Faculty of Agribusiness and Communication Sciences (FACS) on the same campus since they all offer agricultural related programmes in the University. Does the low enrolment of first year students a reflection of lack of interest for the programme on the part of students, and for that matter, the stakeholders?



### *b) Specific Objective*

To find out why students are not interested in the programmes run by the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment. The study also aims at determining effective ways of admitting more students into the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In identifying the underlining causes of this trend have for the most part involved quantitative analysis of students' enrolment rationales and their attitude to science (Woolnough, 1994)

### **Approach**

The three (3) main research instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires, observation and interviews. In this study data was collected using two methods; questionnaires and interviews.

In educational research, questionnaires are widely used to collect data. The use of questionnaires is very effective for securing factual information. The Researcher used paper-pencil-questionnaires were administered to respondents. People are more truthful while responding to the questionnaires regarding controversial issues in particular due to the fact that their responses are anonymous. But they also have drawbacks. Majority of the people who receive questionnaires don't return them and those who do, might not be representative of the originally selected sample. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). To reduce the low return rate of the questionnaires used in the study, the researcher personally visited respondents to distribute and retrieve questionnaires that had been administered.

Face -to -face interviews was used by the researcher because they had a distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gained their cooperation. Interviews yield higher response rates in survey research. They also allow the researcher to clarify ambiguous answers and when appropriate, seek follow-up information. The disadvantages are that interviews become impractical when large samples are involved. They are also time consuming and expensive. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001).

### **Sampling Survey**

The researcher interviewed all the current academic staff of the Faculty because the entire staff strength in the Faculty was 34 comprising 24 teaching staff and 10 support staff. The questionnaires were administered to all students from levels 100 to 400. The entire student population was 359.



## **Research Instruments**

The questionnaires were prepared by the researcher. To enhance the validity of the questionnaires it was presented to two professional researchers for fine tuning. Construct validity was determined by use of statistical instruments. The validity of the questionnaires was calculated by using the Content Validity Index formulae and it gave a figure of 0.7. Kathuri and Palls (1993) argue that instruments with validity confidence of at least 0.7 are accepted as valid in research.

## **Validity of Research Instruments**

Validity measure the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. The question of validity can be raised in three contexts. These are the form of the test, the purpose of the test and the population for whom it is intended for.

Validity of questionnaires ensures that respondents' responses made sense and meaningful to enable good conclusions to be drawn from the sample studied to the research population (Creswell, 2008). The questionnaires were hand delivered to the respondents.

## **Reliability of Research Instruments**

The researcher was able to enhance the reliability of the instruments by using the test- retest reliability. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) argue that for most educational research, stability of scores over a period of two months is usually viewed as sufficient evidence of test-retest reliability. Therefore, the researcher used pre-test and retest the instruments on a small number of undergraduate students in an interval of two months. The researcher then computed the reliability for multi-item opinion questions using SPSS computer software. The items were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

A letter of introduction to carry-out the research was obtained from the Registrar of UDS to allow the researcher to carry out the study. The researcher obtained documents such as students' lists and numbers and records on application for admission. The researcher administered the questionnaires to respondents and the questionnaire was retrieved within one week.

## **Data Analysis**

The researcher compiled, sorted, edited, classified data from questionnaires and coded all the questionnaires into a coding sheet and analyzed using a computerized data analysis package known as Statistical Package for Social Science 13.0. The Pearson product-moment correlation

coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to compute the relationship between admission points, parents' social economic status, school background, choice of programmes by applicants and job prospects after graduation.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Students' application records and admission points as well as records of applicants' choice of programmes are property of the University. The researcher therefore sought permission from the Registrar of the University to conduct the research by using this information. The researcher also assured respondents that the study was strictly for academic purposes and that utmost confidentiality would be observed. The data used in this study was anonymously coded and cannot therefore be traced back to individual students.

## **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **Description of the Dependent Variable (DV)**

This Section describes the dependent variable (Academic choice of programme). In this study, academic choice of programme was conceptualized to mean, decision made on the course of programme to pursue in the university (Cambridge University Reporter, 2003).

The dependent variable was addressed in Section A of the questionnaire using five (5) questions of Likert scale type ranging From Strongly Agreed (1), Agreed (2), three (3) represents Not Sure, disagreed (4) and Strongly Disagreed (5). The results were used to build five scales of importance and preferences. Factor analysis of ratings of importance of 334 respondents (300 students and 34 staff) characteristics yielded dimensions upon which students decisions are based.

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics showing the frequency and percentage for the respective questions in the dependent variable in Section A of the questionnaire in varied order.

### **Responses of Students and Staff**

This aspect has to do with the questions posed in the questionnaire in line with the research questions to obtain responses from the respondents (both students and staff).

Table 1: Students: Institutional related factors that influenced the choice of programmes students are pursuing in the Faculty in percentage (%)

Factors	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Not sure	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
academic competitiveness compared to other programs	28.3	37.7	17.7	8.7	7.7
opportunity to major in area of interest	28.7	39.3	16.3	10.3	5.3
availability of tutoring services	22.7	37.3	26.3	9.7	4.0
availability of academic advisory services	14.0	34.7	28.3	14.0	9.0
opportunity to travel abroad	14.0	24.7	28.0	19.0	14.3
contact with faculty lecturers while in SHS	12.0	23.0	23.0	21.3	20.7
contact with students offering the program I'm pursuing	12.7	35.0	19.7	19.0	13.7
opportunity to get a job after completion	29.3	36.0	17.3	10.0	7.3

Table 1 illustrates that 29.3% of students strongly agreed that there was opportunity to get a job after graduation, 36.0% agreed, 17.3% of the respondents were not sure whether they will obtain a job after graduation. Also 10.0% disagreed and 7.3% strongly disagree on the possibility of getting a job after completion. This can be reflected on why the Faculty was not meeting the set target of admitting at 200 students each academic year since the establishment of the programme. It also implies that more than 40% of the students did not choose to study the programme.

The other factor which was considered for the study was the 'opportunity to 'major' in the area of interest which 28.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 39.3% agreed, making a total of 69% agreeing to that fact that it influences students choice of admission into the University. Whereas 16.3% of the respondents (students) were not sure, 15.6% disagreed that 'opportunity to major in the area of interest' could have any effect on admission intake of students in the Faculty with 10.3% disagreed and 5.3% strongly disagreed.

Since personal variables are said to have an effect on academic choice of programmes, the researcher considered background variables of respondents to the dependent variable of choice of academic programme. For purposes of testing whether background of respondents affected academic choice of programme, all items in Section A of the questionnaire for the dependent variable (academic choice of programme) were considered

Table 2: Staff - Factors that influenced the choice of programmes students are pursuing in the Faculty

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
the academic reputation of the programmes offered	30.0	55.0	10.0	5.0	0.0
comparison of academic programmes	22.5	50.0	22.5	5.0	0.0
the availability of effective tutoring services	40.0	52.5	2.5	5.0	0.0
the availability of academic advisory/counseling services	7.5	37.5	42.5	12.5	0.0
knowledge of career progression after completion	22.5	40.0	30.0	7.5	0.0
the opportunities to study abroad after graduation	12.5	42.5	25.0	20.0	0.0
the proximity of the institution to students home	10.0	35.0	27.5	22.5	5.0
the prospects of getting a job after completion	17.5	47.5	22.5	10.0	2.5
cost of pursuing the programmes	22.5	40.0	25.0	12.5	0.0

The staff responded that 65% were convinced of the prospect of getting a job after completion of the programme out of which 17.5% agreed strongly and 47.5% agreed. It further indicated that 22.5 were not sure they would get job to do after graduation. Ten percent (10.0%) disagreed and 2.5% disagreed strongly. The data illustrates that majority of staff respondents (65%) had hope that on completing the programme graduates would be able to get a job.

The staff also responded to other variables like the academic reputation, availability of effective tutoring services, cost of pursuing the programme and many variables.

Table 3: STUDENTS - Other external related factors that influenced the choice of programmes students are pursuing in the Faculty

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
parents or guardians advice	27.3	31.0	16.7	15.7	9.3
my friend's advice	12.7	24.3	30.7	20.3	12.0
my SHS counselors advice	10.7	24.0	20.3	30.0	15.0
people I knew who were already pursuing this program	12.7	27.3	20.7	24.0	15.3
mail I received about this faculty	13.7	23.0	24.3	24.3	14.7
internships available to do attachment	10.7	34.7	24.7	19.7	10.3
prospects of landing a job after graduating	14.0	37.0	22.7	17.7	8.7
my feelings about this program	19.0	34.3	22.0	14.7	10.0
newspaper advertisement	14.0	22.7	26.3	20.3	16.7

Table 3 above illustrates other external factors that influenced the choice of programmes, 27.3% strongly agreed that 'parents or guardians advice' influenced choice of admission whereas 31.0% agreed making a total of 58.3 of student responding to it. In all, 25% disagree that 'parents or guardians' could influence choice of admission of students to enroll with 15.7 disagreeing and 9.3% strongly disagreeing. Only 16.7% of the respondents were not sure whether 'parents or guardians' could have influence over choice of programme.

The other variable like 'my friend's advice' indicates that 37.0% agreed that it has influence over their choice of programmes whereas 32.3% disagreed. However, 30.7% were not sure.

Another important variables like 'prospects of landing a job after graduating' has shown a total of 51.0% of the respondents agreed to that whereas almost half of the respondents (49%) were either not sure or disagreed completely.

Students responded on the feelings of the programme which is 53.3% agreed, 22.0% were not sure and 24.7% disagreed. This implied that a little above 50% willingly chose to pursue the programme, the rest did not.

The research also indicated that 63.7% of the respondent were not sure or either disagreed that there would be 'internships available to do attachment' when one enrolls to read the programme. The remaining 36.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed hence the result of not meeting the target of 200 student intake each academic year.

Table 4: STAFF - Other external factors that influenced the choice of programmes students are pursuing in the Faculty

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
the academic reputation of the programmes offered	30.0	55.0	10.0	5.0	0.0
comparison of academic programmes	22.5	50.0	22.5	5.0	0.0
the availability of effective tutoring services	40.0	52.5	2.5	5.0	0.0
the availability of academic advisory/counseling services	7.5	37.5	42.5	12.5	0.0
knowledge of career progression after completion	22.5	40.0	30.0	7.5	0.0
the opportunities to study abroad after graduation	12.5	42.5	25.0	20.0	0.0
the proximity of the institution to students home	10.0	35.0	27.5	22.5	5.0
the prospects of getting a job after completion	17.5	47.5	22.5	10.0	2.5
cost of pursuing the programmes	22.5	40.0	25.0	12.5	0.0

In Table 4, 'Other external factors that influenced the choice of programmes students are pursuing showed that 30.0% strongly agreed that the 'academic reputation of the programmes offered' influenced the choice of programme and 55.0% agreed. This implies that a total of 85% were in agreement. It was only 5.0% which did not agree and only 10% were not sure about the influence of academic reputation of the programmes offered.

A total of 92.5% responded that 'the availability of effective tutoring services' influenced students choice of programme and only 2.5% were not sure and 5.0% did not agree.

On the 'the availability of academic advisory/counseling services', research indicated that only 7.5% strongly agreed and 37.5% agreed and a total of 12.5% disagreed with 0.0% strongly disagreed. However, 42.5% were not really sure.

No staff strongly disagreed whether the 'opportunities to study abroad after graduation', but 20.0% disagreed whereas 25.5% were not sure whether to agree or not and a total of 55.0% agreed to it out which only 12.5% strongly agreed and 42.5% did not agree.

The 'prospects of getting a job after completion' showed that 17.5% strongly agreed, 47.5% agreed, 22.5% were not sure and a total of 12.5 disagreed.

### **Comparison of Responses between Students and Staff**

This section compared the degree of responses from both students and staffs whether they were in agreement or there were some differences. The responses were categorized into three (3). These were Agreed, Neutral and Disagreed.

On the 'the prospects of getting a job after completion' 65% of the respondents (staff) agreed to it whereas 51% of the students also agreed which indicated that respondents have high hopes that they would get employment of graduating/completing the programme in the Faculty.

However, interestingly 22.5% of the staff were not sure of the prospects of getting a job after completion and 22.7% of the students were also not sure of obtaining job after completion. This implied that both staff and students of the Faculty were of the same view.

On the contrary, 12.5% of staff disagreed whether they would get a job and 26.4% of the students also disagreed on the possibility of landing a job after completion.

The survey also compared the 'availability of academic advisory services which students 48.7% positively agreed and 45.0% of the staff also agreed. Those who agreed were less than 50% of the respondents for both staff and students

On the contrary, 12.5% of staff disagreed whereas 14.9% of students also disagreed. Ironically 42.5% of staff were neutral in the response and slightly less of the students 28.3% were neutral.

## SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The high status of students depends on the number of students in the institution. The university is experiencing decrease in student number particularly the FRNR, since its establishment it had not been able to meet its set target (200 students per academic year). Tertiary education is arguably a high-involvement product. For many students and their parents, it represents a substantial investment in monetary and temporal terms. The research looked at some factors in a bid to increase the intake. Some of the factors that influenced the choice of programme were importance attached to the programme, reputation attached to the institution etc. other external factors that caused the low turnout of students in the Faculty with similar and same programmes in the KNUST, UCC , UENR among other institutions.

The main research question was ‘What are the factors that influence choice of programmes in FRNR and other questions like the measures used to reach out to prospective applicants. Also whether there were different perceptions from both students and staff on the job prospects after completion of the programme.

The research also considered the main objective and the specific objectives. These were to investigate why FRNR continues to receive low student as compared to other faculties which offer similar programmes on the same campus and why students were not interested or attracted to the programme. It determined the effective ways of admitting more students in the faculty.

The research review tried to define meanings of relevant words in the research like ‘intake’, ‘admission’, ‘renewable’, ‘natural’, ‘resources’, and ‘natural resources’ among others. The concept was believed that the quality of input invariably affected quality of output.

The research is of the view that the following were factors influencing decision of choice – economic and social factors like the economic model status attainment model and combined models. Other factors include geographical location of the institute, cost, size, distance, quality of programme, reputation of institute, easy access to home etc

The manner in which the study was conducted is outlined here - research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability and descriptive survey. The research design looked at qualitative and quantitative research strategies in collecting data for both questionnaire and interview. Qualitative research was used based on variable in analyzing data.

The population used for the data collection was 334 respondents for both staff and students. Staff was 34 and students 300 as against the proposed 138 students and 34 staff initially targeted.



The questionnaire used was in two categories – special questionnaire for staff and another designed for students. It was categorized into sections A, B and C for biography, main question and other external factors respectively. The variables used were parents' social and economic status, choice of programme and job prospects after completion etc

The research discussed the background of the respondents (students and staff), gender, age, level (year), qualification, etc. The main data was analyzed based on the factors that influence choice of programme, that was the opportunity to get a job after completion, availability of academic advisory/counseling services, etc. The research also looked at other external factors, like parents/ guardian advice, the prospects of obtaining a job after graduation, internships available for attachment and newspaper advert.

## CONCLUSIONS

The factors affecting students' choice of programmes largely depend on some issues which were mainly the academic reputation of the institution, programme quality and size, price/cost, financial aid, geographic location, contact with Faculty, and a students' individual characteristics such as academic ability and achievement. In these findings respondents agree strongly that academic competitiveness compared to other programmes, opportunity to major in area of interest tend to strongly influence students choice of admission.

The findings further revealed that the academic reputation of the programmes offered, the availability of effective tutoring services, knowledge of career progression after completion, cost of pursuing the programmes and the opportunity to get a job after completion also strongly affect students choice of admission. The study would have been extended to other Faculties but time constraints and other challenges made it to be limited to only FNRE.

Parents or guardians advice as well as students feelings about this programme play important role in the number of students to be admitted in the university.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher outlined the following recommendations

1. The Faculty should consider changing the name of the Faculty to be in line with current trends in naming programmes/courses at the tertiary level. After holding a stakeholder consultations, the Faculty rebranded its name from the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources (FRNR) to Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment (FNRE) which was step in the right direction; and it reviewed the Departments into eight and three Centres as follows:
  - i. Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management;

- ii. Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Management;
- iii. Department of Environment and Sustainability;
- iv. Department of Ecotourism and Hospitality;
- v. Department of Forestry and Forest Resources Management;
- vi. Department of Resources and Environmental Economics and Policy;
- vii. Department of Agro-Forestry and Rural Development; and
- viii. Department of Geography and Geo-Information Sciences.

The three (3) Centres were:

- i. Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Centre (IFAC);
  - ii. Lovi Research Centre (LVC); and
  - iii. Tourists Information Centre.
2. The Faculty was advised to admit students to pursue lower level courses/programmes like Certificates and Diploma courses, after completion the students would definitely ladder on to read higher level courses like from Certificate to Diploma and from Diploma to Degree within the same Faculty. This was being done by other Faculties/Schools.
3. The research was limited to only FRNR because of other constraints. A faculty like Faculty of Integrated Development Studies (FIDS) which run Diploma in Integrated Community Development (DICD) but the students ladder on to degree programme in the Faculty of Planning and Land Management (FPLM) all on the same campus. Also the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) should be considered for future research because of its dwindling nature of students in the Faculty. The FAS should also consider the possibility of introducing bridging or access programme for students who defects in one or two of the elective subjects in the pure sciences. The way Faculty of Mathematical Sciences (FMS) does to obtain more students in the Faculty;
4. It should be noted that many of the factors raised were things that institutions could not change. These were Geography, Cost, and Faculty were all part of a college's identity. There were more channels than anyone can probably manage, but if one can hone in on a few that were most effective and focus on content specific to prospective students, the institution would be giving itself a nice advantage over its rivals."

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