

The case of the National Fisheries University (NFU) of Japan



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- NFU is only the specialized university with the term “Fishery” in its name in Japan.
- At the undergraduate level, there are 854 students at the NFU (160 female students, 19%, 2018).
- The role of the NFU has been “Development of human resources playing key roles in the fishery sector”.
- We have 5 departments.

Fisheries Distribution and Management Department, Fishery Science and Technology Department, Ocean Mechanical Engineering Department, Food Science and Technology Department, Applied Aquabiology Department

How gender concerns been mainstreamed/ integrated in fisheries curricula or in the teaching of fisheries courses?

- Even at present, our university curriculum contains no classes with “Women” or “Gender” in the title.
- The social science course is the only one that mentions gender at all. Of its 15 classes, the term “Gender” is found twice in the syllabus.
- In my class on “Fishery distribution and process business”, which also considers entrepreneurship among fishery women.
- Only 20 students among the 200 students in each year have a chance to learn about gender.

What are the gains in gender mainstreaming in fisheries education thus far?

- Nonetheless, in our department, students do have a chance to encounter gender or a teacher with some awareness of gender issues.
- Therefore, some students become interested in women and gender issues in the fishery sector and address this in their graduation theses.
- Our department has graduated about 340 students to the present day. But only 10 students considered women or gender topics. Most were female students.

What issues or challenges remain?

- Most teachers make comments critical of these graduate theses such as, “Are they trying to keep men out?” or “This is reverse discrimination, if the group doesn’t permit male employees.”
- They don’t have awareness of gender issues and cannot understand even when background is explained.
- Our main conference is the Japanese Society of Fisheries Economics, which started in 1953. But 2014 was the first year in which “Women” was considered as a main theme. In addition, as an academic gathering, there was very little recognition of women and gender issues as critical issues.

Suggestions on ways forward

- In Japan, gender issues are not mainstream in the fishery sector, nor in the curriculum of the NFU, which turns out large numbers of students into the fishery sector and our academic society.
- But precisely because the NFU produces numerous human resources into the fishery sector, we need to educate male students and others from a gender perspective. I believe there is a possibility of changing our society in the future and I believe we need to educate about this at the NFU.