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Is aquaculture the career for you?

By **JR Paniza**

Aquaculture is a challenging career. Success in this field does not solely depend on an impeccable academic foundation but also on personal values and the environmental forces that influence it. Employment or ventures in aquaculture may take one to all corners of the world and in diverse living conditions. Aquaculture can be a toss up between career and lifestyle. Practitioners often tell about their fulfillment in this field. It can also be a gold mine if luck strikes you.

Deciding on a career in aquaculture is not an easy task. It is a mind-boggling process of evaluating one's interests, financial capability, relevant training and experiences, and personal attributes that fit in this particular career path.

According to human development experts, an individual's career choice relies on qualities that vary in combinations and degrees that exist in a person. Measuring tools have been developed to examine individual qualities that determine career paths.

The following test, which was adapted from TV Rao's *Entrepreneurial Orientation Inventory*, proposes to gauge an individual's prospect for a career in aquaculture.

Take the test! Instructions

This test contains 15 pairs of statements. In each pair, you may agree with one statement than the other. You have five points to distribute between two statements in each pair to indicate the extent to which you agree with each. You may distribute the five points in any combination (0, 5; 1, 4; 2, 3; 3, 2; 4, 1; 5, 0) and vice versa but you cannot divide the points equally (e.g., 2.5) between two choices.

- 1 How successful an aquaculturist will be depends on a number of factors. One's capabilities may have very little to do with one's success.
 A capable aquaculturist can always shape his/her own destiny.
- 2 Aquaculturists are born, not made.
 It is possible for people to learn to become more scientific/technical/entrepreneurial/managerial even if they do not start out that way.
- 3 There is no need for advance planning because no matter how scientific one is, there will always be chance factors that influence good harvest/output.
 Capable aquaculturists believe in planning their activities/inputs in advance.
- 4 Whether or not an individual can become a successful aquaculturist depends on social and economic conditions.
 Aquaculturists can always be successful, irrespective of social and economic conditions.
- 5 Aquaculturists are bound to fail at least half the time because success or failure depends on a number of factors beyond their control.
 Aquaculturists fail because of insufficient academic training or their own lack of ability and perceptiveness.
- 6 Aquaculturists are often victims of forces they cannot understand or control.
 By taking an active part in scientific, academic, technical, economic, political and social affairs, aquaculturists can control events that affect their projects.
- 7 Whether or not you can get a business loan depends on how fair your parents/bank officers you deal with are.
 Whether or not you get a business loan depends on how good your project plan is.
- 8 There is no point in collecting a lot of information/technology. In the long run, the bigger your farm/project, the better the profit is.
 Whether putting up a farm, consulting, or consulting a company, it is wise to collect as much information/technology as possible from various sources or trainings/education before making a choice.
- 9 Whether or not you make a profit or a name in aquaculture depends on how lucky you are.
 Whether or not you make a profit or a niche in aquaculture depends on how capable you are in the industry.
- 10 Some types of people can never be successful as aquaculturists.
 It is possible to develop scientific/technical/entrepreneurial/managerial knowledge in different types of people.
- 11 Whether or not you will be a successful aquaculturist depends on the environment from which you came.
 People can become successful aquaculturists with effort and capability irrespective of the environment from which they came.
- 12 These days, people must depend at every point on the help,

support or benevolence of others (e.g. government, banks, families).

- It is possible to put up one's own aquaculture venture without depending too much on other people. What is required is the knack in dealing with people, technology and nature.
- 13 The environmental, economic and political situation today is very unpredictable. Even perceptive aquaculturists falter quite often.
- When the aquaculturist's outlook of the environmental, economic and political situation is wrong, that person can blame only himself/herself for failing to read the environment, economy, and politics correctly.
- 14 There is no point in spending time planning or doing things to change one's destiny. What is going to happen will happen.
- With efforts, related studies and training, aquaculturists can determine their own destiny.
- 15 No matter how hard a person works, he/she will achieve only what is destined.
- The reward one achieves depends solely on the efforts one makes.

How do you score? Computation and interpretation

The next thing you do is to sum up the points. Sum up the points of the first statements; the total is your score for internal locus of control. Next, add the points for the second statements; this total is your score for "external locus of control."

Now, get the internal/external locus of control ratio. Divide the total internal score by your total external score.

If your internal/external ratio is above 3.0, this indicates a high level of aquaculture internality. This may mean that you have high chances to initiate or be involved in aquaculture activities. Ratios below 1.0 point are those respondents who have a more external (less interest in aquaculture activities) locus of control orientation. It may follow then that there is a need for this type of person to become more internal in order to be able to initiate aquaculture activities. Ratios above 1.0 indicate possible interest in the field and practice of aquaculture. The higher the ratio above 1.0, the more internal the person is.

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Take this aquaculture orientation test!

Do you identify yourself with these statements?

YES NO

- I am fascinated with fishes.
- I am interested in chemistry, biology and physics.
- I can survive living in diverse environments.
- I am meticulous even to the smallest details.
- I love the idea of becoming a scientist.
- I know how to swim.
- I spearhead/get involved in writing scientific papers.
- I can work alone.
- I find laboratory work challenging.
- I can work with people, even with those I do not know.
- I like to work in remote places.
- I am keen on working on something even without a guarantee that it will succeed.
- I prepare alternative courses of action.
- I look at things and events analytically.
- I discover new things.
- I find writing interesting.
- I am motivated to do things not only for money but also for their merits.
- I seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- I am curious about the development of things.
- I do not mind going through complicated processes.
- I plan things and events systematically.
- I attribute success not only to academics but also to other factors that influence it.
- I am a risk taker.
- I am innovative.
- I am eager to learn and discover unknown things.
- I don't surrender even on the verge of failure.
- I am adventurous.
- I am comfortable working with people from different backgrounds.
- I get things started and make them go.
- I search answers for things unfamiliar.

If you say "yes" to 15 or more of these statements, consider a career in aquaculture. Your orientation inventory may be a sign of a serious leaning towards aquaculture. -- JRP

IS AQUACULTURE ... FROM PAGE 17

Non-aquaculture practitioners are externally oriented while aquaculture practitioners are internally controlled. Non-aquaculturists think that things happen to them. Aquaculturists believe that they can make things happen.

Aside from internal proficiency, there are other competencies that you should develop to become successful. These are the values identified with accomplished aquaculture practitioners:

- Knowledge of the technical aspects of the business
- Innovativeness
- Risk-taking
- Opportunity/information seeking
- Persuasion and networking
- Self-confidence
- Systematic planning
- Self-reliance
- Obsession for quality/efficiency/effectiveness

If you zealously identify yourself with the above-mentioned values, it follows that you may have a certain extent of interest in aquaculture. But this may vary in certain combinations and degrees. It may also imply that you have a knack for this practice.

On the other hand, if you only identify some values innate to you or none at all, it does not mean that you no longer have a chance for a career in aquaculture. All you have to do is work hard and widen your interest in fisheries, acquire a good grasp of the science, develop good human relations and look forward that soon you will find a niche for yourself in aquaculture. ###

PHILIP CRUZ ... FROM PAGE 22

and the government would intervene only when problems occur. Most of the time, the help would come too late.”

The person must also learn to persevere and be resilient because aquaculture is a risky business.

“The rate of failure is high. There are chances for diseases, slow growth and mortality. So you have to understand what you are doing in order to be on top of problems and not just depend on technicians.”

“We have a lot of very good aquaculturists around but they are not coming out because they are not willing to take risks. So it is the businessmen with the money who reap the benefits of aquaculture. They hire the experts and it is them who grow big.

“I would like to see more of my colleagues as entrepreneurs. I’m sure they will realize, as I did, that it is worth the risk.”

Philip Cruz lives in Bacolod City with his wife Ruby and their three kids. ###

I WANT TO BE A DEEP-SEA SCIENTIST ... FROM PAGE 18

already am, so that I will learn from nature. Just like my Dad did when he was small. He was smart, meticulous, curious, always an outside person, and... “explorative”. He would go to a place called Calvert Cliffs and come home with a bucket full of fossil shells and sharks’ teeth. He had a skull collection which included the skull of a wild cat from the forest behind their house. He found a racoon skeleton which he assembled really carefully and now is still in perfect condition. I really want to be like my Dad.

If I become a deep-sea explorer, I could help the Philippines a lot because I can learn about underwater earthquakes and I can give out warnings of possible tidal waves. I could learn more about the fishes in the sea, and provide information that would help fishermen a lot. I could even explore the bottom of the Philippine Deep, the second deepest part of ocean in the world, and I might find a fish that is very healthy to eat, or might have something that can prevent certain cancers or sicknesses. Well, that would be a great help. Imagine, the Philippines known around the world for something like that! Or I might even discover a colony of coelacanths! Remember, the last specimen was caught in Indonesian seas, so it is possible to have some in Philippine waters. ###

THE AQUA TECHNICIAN ... FROM PAGE 24

those in equivalent positions in companies, but the incentives are good. You can have privileges like getting P2 per kilo of harvested products or 10% to 15% profit sharing. (An exceptional technician in Mindanao had a 50-50 sharing.) Success in the industry means more and bigger offers and a very bright future.”

Just like in any career, technicians have their ups and downs. Up means a good harvest, especially if production is above target. Everybody is happy and the rewards are big. Production failures also happen, but vigilance can minimize damages. Extra efforts are admired and would sometimes soften the impact of a failure on the management.

People come for advice, assistance or services.

“This is where fulfillment comes in – when one is able to share his technical know how and sees his clients happy.”

Originally, he did not like fisheries. It was his mom who chose it for him. She inspired him to pursue the course which he eventually liked and learned to love.

Jam, as his friends call him, is from Basilan and is married to Rosalie who comes from Butuan City. They have a daughter named Melona Rose.

Mr. Jamon is now an aquaculturist at SEAFDEC AQD’s technology verification and extension project. ###