

Overall Findings

Year 2002 had not really been an encouraging one as far as S&T matters are concerned. Perceived public knowledge may have increased but the level was still only between moderately and slightly knowledgeable. The situation is made worse when the study revealed that the level of interest in S&T had hardly changed over the years these studies were conducted.

In terms of attitudes, although Malaysians were still supportive of the impact of S&T on ordinary living, the number of those who supported S&T had been significantly reduced by more than 10%. The percentage of those who believed on the positive impact of S&T on the quality of life was higher for the material aspects of life but not for the social environmental aspect.

Society believed that S&T research was important for economic growth and it had a positive impact and was important for social development. Genetic engineering and cloning, though known to a majority of the respondents, were not really supported by them. Less than half of the respondents could quote all the flagships of MSC. It was thus clear that high technology and those related to it were not well known among the public at large. Declining interest in S&T was perhaps due to lack of information and not due to lack of the required qualification nor due to the teaching approach of S&T being too academic.

The level of overall understanding of S&T terms and concepts among Malaysians had apparently declined to less than 50%. The opposite was true for the understanding of environmental terms and concepts which had shown significant improvement. The subjective level of understanding had been consistently higher than the objective understanding.

Just as in previous studies, TV and newspapers continued to be the most popular sources of both general and science information. Science magazines and the Internet were least used as sources of information particularly among the working adults be they professionals or in the management or in the lower rung of job status. However, sport and entertainment are the most favoured items of TV programmes and newspapers. The radio was mainly for entertainment. The Internet was fast becoming popular among Malaysians with the percentage of Internet users on the rise from year to year. They either used the Internet at home or at Cyber Cafes. The office was another place where the Internet was being accessed. Internet users came mainly from those with science background, with tertiary level education, in the professional field, in management category and with high household income. Hence, Internet users are limited to selected groups only.

Zoos and museums were the two most popular places of S&T interest visited by the respondents. Less than 20% visited Petrosains, National Science Centre and The Planetarium. These places of S&T interest had not been well visited for all these years simply because they are situated far from most of the respondents' homes.

Less than 20% of the respondents were aware of the eighteen government supported S&T programmes. Out of these eighteen, only four are well known to them and these programmes were basically school-related programmes.

At the international level, the overall knowledge of S&T terms and concepts of Malaysians was generally lower than that of the USA, Europe and Japan. The level of S&T knowledge among Americans showed a gentle but progressive increase while Malaysians showed a marked decline of S&T knowledge in this study compared to that found in previous studies. The gap in knowledge between the USA and Malaysia is actually quite large.

Malaysians tended to have about the same level of knowledge and interest but not among the Americans, Europeans and the Japanese where the interest level was significantly higher than the knowledge level.

TV was the most popular medium as a source of information. This was followed by newspapers. The selection pattern of most watched programmes is the same between Europeans and Malaysians, with Malaysia having more viewers than Europe.