

A study of R & D activities among Young Scientists in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has only 193 scientists and engineers per million engaged in R&D activities and 0.022% of world literature recorded in the science citation index of 1998. The present study investigated the availability of research facilities, career development opportunities and attitudes of young scientists towards S & T in national development. 1300 young scientists (aged <45 y0) responded to a structured questionnaire circulated through NASTEC, from June 1999 to August 2000.

Results showed that 86% of the young scientists was engaged in research. 565 of the research was collaborative work. 65% of them had instrumentation facilities on shared basis, while 22% had access to specialized facilities (eg. Mass Spectroscopy). Facilities for pilot-plant use or field studies were poor (<37%). Over 85% had easy access to library facilities. 53% of the research funds was from government sources. Only 29% of the work was documented as publications. 84% agreed that post-graduate qualifications were essential for research, while only 58% had facilities for career development.

53% of scientists felt that their superiors did not provide adequate guidance and support towards conducting their research. However, 99% of scientists felt that their research projects contributed towards national development, either directly or indirectly.

The majority of young scientists felt that they were actively engaged in productive research contributing to national development. However, lack of guidance and support from superior officers and inadequate facilities for career development, could be major constraints to reckon with in the future.