

Signs of disinterest in Science

THE declining number of students taking up Science subjects is worrying. The issue has been long discussed, but nothing concrete has materialised.

Based on reports in newspapers and portals, only 15,000 students in local universities have chosen Science, Technology and Innovation as their mainstream study.

Another report (last year) showed that only 21 per cent of upper secondary school students opted for Science.

Why are students losing interest in learning Science? Are teachers using the right approach? Is it our education system? Blaming teachers or the system will not help.

The issue needs to be addressed as Malaysia is heading for developed nation status by 2020.

If the problem is not rectified, we will not achieve Vision 2020, as one of the criterion is efficient human capital.

We need to re-look at how Science is being taught. What is the root cause of this lack of interest in Science? As an academician, I find that students' attitude is the main factor in determining the courses that they like.

Several studies have proved that a negative attitude towards Science results in poor performance.

Science is difficult to learn and getting good marks is not easy. Once the grades drop, it affects other subjects as well.

To be good in Science, students have to excel in Mathematics.

Science and Mathematics are two core subjects that have been set as the minimum requirement for entry level at universities, colleges and other educational institutions.

Since literacy in Science among students is low, then rebranding Science in terms of teaching and learn-

ing has to be seriously considered. The perception that it is a difficult subject must be changed.

This can be done through the integration of Science in other subjects promoted through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Learning Science can be interesting since the STEM content is related to real-world applications. Such activities can be conducted through collaborative, hands-on activities, which can boost students' critical thinking.

The classes should be made fun, and understanding will come naturally when the classes are interesting and engaging.

As students' attitude towards Science improves, their reasoning level increases. Initiatives on specific related workshops can be implemented and competitions held to acknowledge students' Science projects.

Next, to ensure that choosing Science is worthwhile, students have to be guided in terms of career path.

In this case, STEM-related industries can collaborate with schools and tertiary educational institutions. Visits to industries will expose students to suitable careers.

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Make Science subjects fun and engaging.