

CORRESPONDENCE

Nurturing young scientists

The article 'Nurturing young scientists' (*Curr. Sci.*, 1995, 69, 893) discusses the tremendous importance and significance of furthering the development of young scientists for the growth of science in the country. Emphasis has been placed for awarding high-budget research projects to deserving young scientists without undue delay. The proposal is attractive and beneficial only to those applicants with permanent positions in the scientific cadre. The scheme is impracticable and will not benefit youngsters who hold temporary positions.

The Indian scientific community has utilized a substantial amount of funds from government and non-government organizations for various research projects. Most of these projects have produced and developed many trained young scientists. Ironically, these very same young research scholars, project assistants and research associates who have worked sincerely for the cause of science are running from pillar to post in search of jobs even after devoting more than 10 years to research. This state of affairs inhibits students from adopting science as a career.

If we sincerely want to do something for the welfare of young scientists, let us develop a system that screens and absorbs eligible young talents into the mainstream of science, and does not just lure them with short-term gains.

A. K. SRIVASTAVA

*Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany,
Lucknow 226 007, India*

Top-scorers need not be the best brains – the other side

C. K. John (*Curr. Sci.*, 1996, 70, 7) implicitly assumes that top scorers are 'memorizing and hard-working students'. In support he gives examples of Faraday and Ramanujan who were below par in their school performance but were highly original scientists. On the contrary, many top researchers are also good performers in their college and university days. There are no statistics to show the correlation between top-scorers and best brains.

John suggests that 'top-scorers are interested in all subjects'; implying that being interested in many subjects is detrimental to creativity. This is a preposterous conclusion, which he emphasizes: 'this would mean that they have

no specific interest in any one subject.' A top researcher need not (but may) have interest in one and only one subject. (Einstein was a good violinist, Raja Ramanna is a professional pianist, Bhabha was a painter of repute and so on.)

The last paragraph of John's letter says, 'Hence the search for talent has to be done at the B Sc level.' The sad fact is that there is hardly any talent left at the B Sc level. Presently, it is very rare that the parents of a bright student and the student himself would choose to go for B Sc. This statement is supported by a small sample survey in a research institute of repute. About forty senior researchers were asked what course

their children (largely bright), about sixty in number were taking or had taken. Only one child, by choice, after getting very good marks had joined B Sc (Maths). Half of the above lot had left the country for higher education. The fact is that neither the parents nor bright children find B Sc an attractive avenue. Of course, exceptions are always there. Therefore, we have to be satisfied with 'top-scorers need not be the best brains'.

P. V. KULKARNI

*18, Sadguru Soc., Kupwad Road,
P.O. Vishrambag,
Sangli 416 415, India*