Are science students interested in science?

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It is a challenge for scientists to keep the public informed and aware of the latest discoveries and technologies. To achieve this aim, the scientists themselves must have an interest in the subject. This study assesses the interest of the students doing Biochemistry and Chemistry at the University of the North (UNIN) and correlates it to the amount of general science knowledge the students have.

The study was based on a set of questions compiled by Durant et al. (1989)[Nature, 340, 11-14]. Students in their second to fourth year of study were given a questionnaire in which they had to answer statements pertaining to their interest and their perceived state of knowledge in different subjects, as well as specific science orientated questions. The survey was performed in February 1990 (n=110), and repeated in February 2001 (n=153).

It seems as though the students are definitely interested in science and this interest increases with experience. There has been a definite shift in the students interest in politics to an interest in scientific discoveries from that of ten years ago. Present students also feel that they are more aware of various facets of science than the students did in the past. This does not, however, reflect in the amount of general science knowledge that the students have. It thus seems that although there is a professed keen interest in science related topics, students tend to focus on their area of study only and do not have a broad scientific view.