

An Experiment with Science Popularization in Rural Schools of Sehore District in Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract : India's school-going population is largely served by an educational system that is, in most rural parts, stuck with methods that emphasize rote learning, endless examinations, and monotonous classroom activities. Rural government schools are generally seen as having poor infrastructure, poor support system and low motivation for teaching as well as learning. It was experienced during the survey of this project that there is lesser motivation of rural boys and girls to attend their schools and still less likely chances to study science, tabooed as "difficult". An experiment was conducted with the help of Rural Knowledge Network Project through Department of Science and Technology, Govt of India in five remote villages of Sehore District in Madhya Pradesh (India) during 2012-2015. These schools are located about 50-70 Km away from Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh and can distinctively qualify as average rural schools. Three tier methodology was adapted to unfold the experiment. In first tier randomly selected boys and girls from these schools were taken to a daylong visit to the Regional Science Centre located in Bhopal. In second tier, randomly selected half of those who visited earlier were again taken to the Science Centre to make models of Science. And in third tier, all the boys and girls studying science were exposed to video lectures and study material through web. The results have shown an interesting face towards learning science among youths in rural schools through peer learning or incremental learning. The students who had little or no interest in learning science became good learners and queries started pouring in from the neighbourhood village as well as a few parents requested to take their wards in the project to learn science. The paper presented is a case study of the experiment conducted in five rural schools of Sehore District. It reflects upon the methodology of developing awareness and interest among students and finally engaging them in popularising science through peer-to-peer learning using incremental learning elements. The students, who had a poor perception about science initially, had changed their attitude towards learning science during the project period. The results of this case, however, cannot be generalised unless replicated in the same setting elsewhere.

Keywords : popularisation of science, science temper, incremental learning, peer-to-peer learning

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