

Research-based learning as an alternative to classroom education

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Astronomy is a globally recognized field that captivates people of all ages, fostering an enthusiasm for science and technology. The National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand (NARIT) has a main mission to carry out, support, and promote the development of astronomy and astrophysics through research and astronomy activity. NARIT's Astronomy Research-Based Learning Workshop offers an alternative to formal education in the classroom. By conducting a research in astronomy, students not only learn relevant skills in astronomy but also get to explore scientific process and gain valuable skills in critical-thinking, both of which are severely lacking in the current learning culture in Thailand. For many students, this workshop offer them a chance to understand better about astronomy as a career as they perform research using real data from robotic telescopes, learning astronomical softwares, working under supervision of real astronomers. However, the workshop also put emphasis on them coming up with their own original questions as they strive to find answers about astronomical events in their everyday lives. Teachers are also proven to be important to this process and also offer a means in which a progress can be passed on between school years. As such, workshops aimed at training astronomy project advisors have also been crucial. To further promote and support the research-based extracurricular activities, NARIT has also established the Thai Astronomical Conference (TACs) to promote astronomy among young people via astronomical research projects. Over the last decade, TACs have facilitated the participation of over 500 research projects. In the last three years, TACs has also recognized students' potential to further their research tasks by awarding medals to excellent participants, motivating them to continue looking into and innovating in the field.

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