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O42 - Developing Student Astronomy Ambassadors through the Vajiravudh College Astronomy Club: An Urban Model for Astronomy Education and Science Communication

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The VC Astronomy Club was established to cultivate students as competent astronomy ambassadors by integrating scientific knowledge, observational skills, leadership, and science communication into a sustainable educational framework. The program addresses the challenge of delivering high-quality astronomy education in an urban environment where severe light pollution significantly restricts direct astronomical observations. Rather than considering these environmental limitations as obstacles, the club employs inquiry-based and experiential learning approaches to transform constraints into opportunities for scientific exploration and innovation.

The educational framework combines classroom instruction, hands-on observational activities, telescope operation and maintenance, and public outreach with participation in national and international astronomy camps, workshops, and academic exchange programs. These authentic learning experiences enable students to strengthen their understanding of astronomical concepts, develop practical observational competencies, and apply scientific inquiry in real-world contexts. Simultaneously, students cultivate transferable skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership.

A key objective of the VC Astronomy Club is to empower students to become effective science communicators who can translate complex astronomical concepts into engaging and accessible learning experiences for the public. Through organizing observation nights, exhibitions, and community outreach activities, students actively promote scientific literacy while inspiring curiosity and appreciation for astronomy among diverse audiences.

The VC Astronomy Club demonstrates that urban light pollution does not preclude meaningful astronomy education. Instead, strategic educational design, experiential learning, and continuous student engagement can foster scientific competence, strengthen public participation in science, and inspire the next generation of learners to explore the universe. This model provides a sustainable and transferable framework for astronomy education that can be adopted by schools facing similar environmental challenges.

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