

Global Astronomy Survey : El Salvador

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3. Astronomy in Schools:

(i) What governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place (co-ordinated either by government departments or national facilities)

Research in astronomy has been reduced to a thesis works in the physics career.

Up to now three thesis work have been developed in this area:

a) Edge UGC 7321 galaxy at neutral Hydrogen

b) Introduction to Cosmology

c) Detailed Analysis of Chemical Abundance into the HD 53300 Star Atmosphere

Our school of physics has offered free courses in Astronomy for all university students at an introductory level.

We also may opt to INAOE courses offered by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in which several of our physics students have taken part in past.

(ii) What non-governmental astronomy/science education and outreach programmes for schools take place (NGO activities or international programmes that your country is involved in)

We maintain links with Astronomy Salvadorian Association, a group of amateur members which provide training on Observational techniques, Astrophotography and so on, as well as guided visits of scholars groups to the Observatory located at San Juan Talpa, at 40 km from San Salvador city, since it is outside of the populated zone has a very dark and clouds free sky, appropriated for observing activities. Moreover, this association meets twice a moth to have technical talks on astronomical subjects, sponsored by Stephen Hawking Science Museum providing its facilities.

(iii) Comment on the presence of astronomy in the school curriculum. Is it part of the school curriculum? Is it very prominent? What age groups?

In our country the astronomy education programmes are developed at official school, scrapping several topics spread all over primary and middle education. A more systematic treatment exists at middle education where the unit called The Earth in the Solar System and The Universe is taught. For middle school teachers formation, the programme include the subject called Earth and Perspective of the Universe which cover and introduction to astronomy.

(iv) Comment on the status of astronomy/science in schools. Are there any specific challenges or setbacks? Sufficient number of students studying maths and science? General interest in maths/science/astronomy in schools?

Aimed to prepare the IYA 2009, we proposed in 2008, to Ministry of Education that our School of Physics is able to provide training in astronomy to a pilot (sample group) group of teacher in such a way that they may initiate in observing techniques at theirs school. Observation could allow then to see planetary motion week by week, topographic accidents on the moon, lunar phases, local latitude determination trough the gnomon (at day time), determining of both latitude and longitude by observing a star, etc. Unfortunately, due to electoral environment our country was engaged at, our proposal was ignored. (our proposal was presented near middle 2008) We will propose newly to new governmental authorities hopping to rescue some of the activities we planed into this plan with Ministry of Education.

Regarding the number of students studying mathematic and sciences the facts are as follows. The yearly incoming in physics and chemistry are about 6 students each one. 20 in geophysics, 40 in math. The total number of students in each career are: Biology 337, physics 97, Math 127, Statistic 164.

It is noticeable the great interest for astronomy amongst children and young people, but is necessary to convince their parents that astronomy is very important and they may get a good job in our country or at centralamerican area.

(v) Self evaluation (according to the different phases above, how would you rate your country in terms of Astronomy in Schools? Please include any other relevant information to motivate your choice.)

Changes in government recently occurred in our country makes us believe sciences opportunities will improve a lot, since they have stated, in more than one occasion, they will support science and technology developing. So it is our task to take advantage of these opportunities. At this moment our country has very low scientific development and a poor support for these activities.