

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Ignition - Primary Space Education (1)

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CREATING SPACE AWARENESS AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN

Abstract

An independent, school-focused space education campaign was started during World Space Week 4-10 October in 2016. The main objective of the campaign was to create awareness of astronomy and space technology among school students. The curriculum was designed to teach the basic concepts of space, a largely neglected topic in Pakistan's schools. This curriculum emphasized hands-on workshops, demonstrations, and special activities for students to understand the concepts of astronomy/space. The sessions were conducted among both male and female students, targeting the age group 6-14 years. These hands-on activities proved to be more significantly engaging compared to other elements such as multimedia presentations with students being much more eager to learn if a topic included activity. By the end of 2018, a huge demand for astronomy sessions at schools was observed after a long period of time during which astronomy had been considered a hobby primarily for wealthy elites. The campaign worked free of cost for two years (May 2016 – May 2018). The campaign established a social enterprise named "Exploration" in 2018 to continue its activities and create an impact on a larger scale. As space education-focused social enterprise Exploration now generates its own funds by teaching astronomy at schools and conducting private workshops. Revenue generated is spent on conducting free sessions for low-income and underprivileged schools and orphanages. Exploration is not confined to any specific city - astronomy sessions are conducted at underprivileged schools in distant cities where online content resources are shared with teaching faculty so they can continue the topics in their classrooms. Exploration is lead by a young girl solely, who has reached out to approximately 3500 kids in her sessions during the time span of four years. These sessions included 39 schools, 10 privately conducted workshops and 5 public observation events. By celebrating World Space Week every year, this campaign helped in assessing loopholes to be filled in order to promote space and fulfill five United Nation Sustainable Development Goals. With increasing demand of workshops and positive response shown by kids, Exploration is taking steps to make Astronomy a part of national school curriculum and translate space magazine/books for kids into Urdu.