

Abstract

Informal Science Education in Thailand for High Potential Science Learners

The study aimed to explore the learning experience in informal science environment of the high potential science learners. The status of science informal education and learning was also reflected from the experts and people of science learning settings. According to the survey, the samplers who were the students in Science Schools/Classrooms response that their most expectations towards the participation in informal science enriched activities or services was to gain knowledge – up to dated changing progress about science. Enjoyable activities and higher level of knowledge comparable to the common learning steps in - class teaching was also at high expectation. The students strongly agreed that the out-of-class science activities were more fun and enjoyable than the in-class.

According to the viewpoints of the administrators and experts of informal science education, there were more efforts to enrich science activities of informal learning in the school curriculum in which the students were given free-choice experiences or feel voluntary to involve. For high potential learners whose nature was to seek for challenge and tended to be self-directed, informal science education provided the opportunity to enhance their scientific capacity. To design the quality of learning experiences, the process of scientific inquiry was the core rather than the content itself. Even though in informal science learning, teachers were still the key persons who contribute to the learners' experiences.

The interaction with staff, people, and other participants in the settings was very important since the students need not only the facilitation and learning inspiration but also the social skills. To move forward the informal science learning environment in Thailand, the science institutions and the higher education organization should promote the research and development in real world science and technology to contribute the good resources for competent learners as well as the science learners in general. There should be more integration of scientist's work when define and design the learning environment as well as the continuing development of the teacher training. Besides a broad array of designed settings, the Internet which becomes the informal settings that youth students are mostly familiar with as self - directed everyday activities; however these young

users needed the guidelines given by instructors, parents, and caretakers in order to ensure the quality use.

Keyword: informal education, informal science learning environment, high potential science learners