

Conclusions of the NASE course in Accra, Ghana July of 2014

The course was positively evaluated. Very good interaction was established between the participants and educators. Important progress in astronomy was noticed in comparison with the previous course (in 2013), including both knowledge of the participants and their interests. The teachers participated actively during both, workshops and conferences. Local instructors were very well selected, and in general did good their presentations.

Organized working groups, about astronomy teaching at schools and about cultural astronomy, were very dynamic.

Respect to the official schooling program and the astronomy teaching at primary and secondary school levels there are no changes in comparison with the last year. Astronomy is still not included in regular schooling system, except some of the basic concepts related with the Earth and Solar System that are taught within physics and/or geography courses. On the other side, the books for the future teachers in integrated sciences (include physics, chemistry, and biology) introduce more information about the Solar System, and concepts like stars, Milky Way, and galaxies. However, teachers recognized the importance of teaching astronomy at all levels, especially because Ghana is now participating in the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project. They also recognized the importance of informing other science teachers about the SKA and astronomy. The president of the Ghana Association of Science Teachers (GAST), Mr. Henry Arthur Gyan, accepted the proposal of NASE educators to give a short presentation about the SKA and astronomy on the next general GAST meeting in August 2014, where more than 500 teachers will be present. Moreover, the participants mentioned the possibility of including the astronomy activities inside the science clubs, that are already established in some schools. After the previous NASE course, one of the teachers started with promoting the astronomy in one of the science clubs in the Eastern Region. Some of the teachers also mentioned that they already used some of the NASE activities at their classes.

Respect to the study of the cultural astronomy also important progress was made since last year. After the NASE course in January 2013, a small group was made led by Dr. Nana Ama Browne Klutse in order to study the use of astronomy in agriculture, fishing, and weather predictions. Until now they did a small research in the Central Region, finding that people still use the stars and moon to predict the weather. Other teachers mentioned that the names of days that they are using are related with the celestial bodies, the same as the names of national teams (e.g, black star, black satellite, black meteor). When falling star is seen, there is a believing that someone important died. Birth of the child is related with the appearance of stars; if the star is bright people believe that important person got born.