

MOBILE SCIENCE POPULARIZATION AMONG ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has a wide territory and many ethnic minorities, which result in multiform culture. The lower level of science literacy among ethnic minority people has been the obstacle of Xinjiang's economic and social development. After equipped with science popularization wagon, Xinjiang Science Popularization Team for Ethnic Minority People carried out colorful science communication activities, to improve the science awareness and literacy level of farmers and herds, adolescents, and grassroots cadres. The case aims to present the process and achievements of the science communication among ethnic minority people, so as to confirm the positive effect of science popularization wagon.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic Minority, Mobile, Science Communication

I. BACKGROUND

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is in the north west China, it's territory is 1.66 million square kilometers, accounting for one sixth of China's total. The main character of Xinjiang's terrain is two basins encircled by three mountains. There are 14 administrative prefectures in Xinjiang now, the average distance between two prefectures is about 740 kilometres, often cut by high mountains. The situation has made people in the autonomous region lack of enough science information.

The population of Xinjiang was 19.05 millions at the end of 2002, and the population of ethnic minority accounts for 60%. There are 13 main ethnic groups in Xinjiang, including Uygur, Han, Kazak, and Hui nationalities. There are also eight religious beliefs, 80% of people in rural areas believe in religion, mostly Islam. The diversities of ethnic groups and religions lead to multiform culture.

In Xinjiang, ethnic minority people's scientific literacy are commonly low, and it has been the obstacle of local economic development. Therefore, to enhance science popularization for ethnic minority people is very important, but it's also very difficult because of the poor traffic condition, cultural diversities and multilingual situation.

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In order to enhance science popularization, so as to improve ethnic minority people's science literacy level, Xinjiang Science Popularization Team for Ethnic Minority People(hereinafter referred to as the Team), supported by China Association for Science and Technology (CAST), equipped with a science popularization wagon in 2001. The Team make full use of the mobile science popularization wagon, to carry out science communication activities, especially combining with the traditional festivals and gathering time of ethnic minority people. These activities have made good effect in improving scientific literacy and scientific awareness among the ethnic minority people.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MOBILE SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

The objectives of the mobile science communication is to improve the scientific literacy and scientific awareness of ethnic minority people, to facilitate their ability of utilizing science and technology in producing and daily life, and also to enhance the overall economic, social development and social stability in Xinjiang autonomous region.

III. TARGET GROUPS

The target groups of the mobile science communication include all the ethnic minority people in Xinjiang, particularly farmers and herdsmen, adolescents, and grassroots cadres.

IV. THE PROCESS OF THE MOBILE SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

1. Participants of the science communication activities

The Team is a non-profit and public interest social organization, fully financed by the Xinjiang local government. It consists of 12 members, who are from three ethnic groups, Han, Uygur and Kazak. The main functions of the Team is to extend S&T information and applicable techniques to farmers and herdsmen, adolescents, and grassroots cadres in vast Xinjiang autonomous regions. Its major task is to perform various non-profit science communication activities.

2. Major strategies of the mobile science communication of the Team

First, to make full use of the traditional festival of different ethnic minority, and gathering opportunity to carry out science popularization activities. More than 10 Science Winter campaigns have been carried in bazaars of Uygur people, Aken Performance of Kazak people and Nadam fairs of Mongolian people. These events are traditional gathering of ethnic minority groups in rural areas. The Team have carried out Science popularizations activities together with the traditional festival to bring S&T, culture and healthy to the countryside. In urban areas, the Team utilizes each year's Science Popularization Month (in each Spring) and S&T Week (the third week of each of May) to perform large scale science popularization campaigns.

Secondly, the science popularization activities must be multiform, so as to improve the effect. According to the different demand and interest of different groups , the Team carried out different kinds of activities, such as science reports, dispense science papers and books, hold science exhibitions and demonstrations, project science films, and so on.

Thirdly, to compile and publish science materials in different ethnic minority' language to improve

the science communication effect. In order to solve the difficulty in science communication for different ethnic minority people, the 12 members of the Team worked out many science popularization materials in different ethnic minority' language with limited capital and non-professional equipment. The Team had compiled and translated 100,000 science popularization books and print materials, which were about 500,000 words in Chinese, Uygur and Kazak each year. These materials covered crop plantation, pasturage growth, animal raising, epidemic prevention and treatment, as well as vegetable and fruit plantation and processing. With these materials, the Team carried out science popularization activities in more than 30 counties in Xinjiang, covering 100,000 people, and the average driving route of the wagon was 20,000 kilometers each year.

3. Main works of the Team in the past 3 years

The science popularization wagon activities had covered all the prefectures and more than two thirds counties in Xinjiang, the first-hand beneficiary were more than 300 thousands, and the total driving route was more than 40 thousands kilometers from 2001 to 2004. The Team and its wagon went to 42 counties, 70 townships and 54 schools in 2004. More than 120,000 science popularization books were distributed in this year; 49 films were projected; and 41 multi-media science popularization exhibitions were held. In addition, health experts and doctors were invited to give 45 lectures in rural and urban areas, held 71 free medical consultations, and beneficiary were more than 150 thousands persons.

V. EFFECTS AND EVALUATIONS OF THE MOBILE SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

First, carrying out science communication activities through the science popularization wagon is the reparation of shortage of science museum in western ethnic minority areas, and it improves the opportunities of the ethnic minority people to obtain science information. The science popularization wagon enable the western ethnic minority people to have the chance to share the charm of modern science, and they can learn the science information in the countryside like in big cities. The wagon makes up the unequation of science resource at certain level.

Secondly, the science popularization wagon enriches the forms, and improves the effects of science communication activities for ethnic minority people. Because of it's bright appearance and colorful science functions, the wagon have aroused ethnic minority people's interests and ardors of taking part in the activities. The wagon like a mobile science museum, welcomed by all the people, especially the adolescents, and it also improve the effects of science activities.

Thirdly, the science popularization wagon has been caught in the eyes of local government leaders, which is good to create science communication environment. The science popularization activities with the science popularization wagon raised the upsurge at the local places, gained the attention and support of local government, so as the mass media's concerns.

The science popularization wagon has become an advanced equipments in science communication in Xinjiang, and it was welcomed and praised by the ethnic minority people as the kindle of science and technology. The science popularization activities with the wagon have been a leading brand of science communication in Xinjiang, and the Team will certainly plays a more important role in science communication in Xinjiang.

VI. AUTHOR AND REFEREES

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VII. SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND/OR LINKS TO RELEVANT WEBSITES

Relevant reports:

1. The science popularization wagon launched in Xinjiang, Xinjiang Daily, December 29th, 2001;
2. The science popularization wagon entered our villages, Xinjiang Daily, February 2nd, 2002;
3. The Xinjiang Science Popularization Team for Ethnic minority People comes to the countryside, Xinjiang Science and Technology Newspaper, May 14th, 2003;
4. Science popularization long march started in Xinjiang, Public Science and Technology Newspaper, January 11th, 2005.

Relevant websites:

1. [http : //www.cast.org.cn/](http://www.cast.org.cn/);
2. [http : //www.xast.cust.com.cn/](http://www.xast.cust.com.cn/).