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**Chapter XX** 

# Integrated e-Learning – new Strategy of Cognition of Real Word in Teaching Physics

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Information communication technologies development have made it possible to introduce Integrated e-Learning (INTe-L) as a new strategy of education of physics based on the method sciences use for the cognition of Real world. Formally, it is based on the e- laboratory with remote experiments across the Internet, e- simulations and e- textbook. Its main features are the observations of the real world phenomena, possibly materialized in data and their evaluation, search for relevant information, its classification and storing. Only then come the explanation and the mathematical formalism of generalized laws and their consequences. The indispensable quality of this method is the active part the student has to take in the teaching process both in lessons, seminaries and laboratory exercises, but also his/her substantially increased activity in form of projects, search for information, presentations etc. In the paper the strategy INTe-L is presented, the general and pedagogical reasons for its introduction

# **INTRODUCTION**

The physics teaching methods at secondary schools and universities face a critical stage of their development. Traditional way of delivering physics is used in the overwhelming majority of physics courses and has familiar characteristics. Most of the class time involves the teacher lecturing to students, assignments are typically homework problems with short quantitative answers, seminaries and especially laboratory work are more or less "recipes " style usually only loosely bound to the time schedule of the lectures and examinations largely based on written exams containing theory and a little of problem solving [1]. Over the past couple of decades, physics education researchers have studied the effectiveness of such practices and conceptual understanding, transfer of information and ideas from teacher to student in a traditional physics lecture and beliefs about physics and problem solving in physics has been extensively studied [2] [3]. For reviews with useful citations, see references [1]. The definitive conclusion is that no matter what is the quality of the teacher, typical students in a traditionally taught course are learning mechanically, memorizing facts and recipes for problem solving, not gaining a true understanding. Equally alarming is that in spite of the best efforts of teachers, typical students are also learning that physics is boring and irrelevant to understanding the world around them [1].

In all new emerging teaching technologies the nearly unanimous opinion prevails about their most decisive feature - to remove the barriers for the possibility for student's independent and exploratory work in all sorts of laboratories in elucidation of the real world [1] [4] [5]. The main possibility, without any dissenting voices for this trend, was to bring about the change in the physics laboratories in the direction of substituting the "recipe labs" [6] by research laboratories. It is very instructive in this respect to consult the very instructive and still valid document, American Association of Physics Teachers (1977) compiled [7], formulating five goals, the physics laboratory should achieve:

1. The Art of Experimentation: The introductory laboratory should engage each student in significant experiences with experimental processes, including some experience designing investigation.

2. Experimental and Analytical Skills: The laboratory should help the student develop a broad array of basic skills and tools of experimental physics and data analysis.

Computers, when used as flexible tools in the hands of students for the collection, analysis, and graphical display of data, can accelerate the rate at which student can acquire data, abstract, and generalize from real experience with natural phenomena. The digital computer is an important tool for an inquiry-based course in physics because it has become the most universal tool of inquiry in scientific research. However, computer simulations should not be used as substitutes for direct experience with physics apparatus.

3. Conceptual Learning: The laboratory should help students master basic physics concepts. The use of computers with laboratory interfaces allows real-time recording and graphing of physical quantities. The qualitative use of real-time graphing in microcomputer-based laboratories (MBL) has increased interest in using the laboratory to

enhance conceptual understanding. The combination of two factors — laboratory course design based on an understanding of the preconceptions that students bring to the study of physics from their past experience, and the continuing development of MBL and other laboratory technology — has the potential to significantly improve the effectiveness of laboratory instruction.

4. Understanding the Basis of Knowledge in Physics: The laboratory should help students understand the role of direct observation in physics and to distinguish between inferences based on theory and the outcomes of experiments.

5. Developing Collaborative Learning Skills: The laboratory should help students develop collaborative learning skills that are vital to success in many lifelong endeavours.

Since 1977 till today, the Information communication technology (ICT) and computers have invaded physics teaching in all directions. The present state of ICT development is characteristic by reaching the level of the quantitative increase of parameters that are bringing about very deep qualitative changes. In an editorial to the recent issue of Eur.J.Phys. devoted to the Student undergraduate laboratory and project work, D. Schumacher [8] brings the examples of the invasion of computers in contemporary laboratory work reaching from project labs, modelling tools, interactive screen experiments, remotely controlled labs, etc., and closing with the plausible statement "One can well imagine that project labs will be the typical learning environment for physics students in the future" [8].

The present discussion about new teaching methods in physics is not any longer directed about the fundamental changes in learning processes due to the new ICT, but about how to introduce the new techniques to everyday teaching process establishing the resources of e-learning, curricula, etc.

With this paper we intend to contribute to this discussion, introducing the new technology and strategy of physics education based on ideas, the sciences use for their study of the real world – i.e. exploratory, discovery and ICT, the Integrated e-Learning (INTe-L). First, we want to give the motivation and pedagogical reasoning for INTe-L, how its components - remote e-experiments, e- simulations and e- textbooks contribute to its goals, and present the first pedagogical experiences with INTe-L on the examples of teaching units Electromagnetic induction, Oscillations and Photovoltaics.

# MOTIVATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL REASONING FOR INTE-L

The first motivation of our work was very practical - the decreasing level of physics education and the popularity of physics subjects among students. Physics is one of the most formidable subject encompassing primary and secondary schools to technical universities with a logical consequence of decreasing level of physics knowledge [2] and hours for physics education. This trend has been in progress for some two decades. The most probable cause for this state is the way physics is presented to the young generation.

The second motivation and inspiration for INTe-L came from the paper of Wieman et al. [1], supporting and calling for the change in the educational technology, seeing the remedy at hand in the existence of simulations. For this purpose, the Colorado University started very instructive www page PhET [9] with plenty of applets, covering the usual scope of physics.

Thomsen and his co-workers introduced the new approach called e-LTR (eLearning, eTeaching, eResearch) using the remote experiments [4]. Introducing the

eResearch, based on the e - laboratory, composed of the remote internet mediated experiments, enabled to fill the till recently missing link of the e-Learning [4].

The third motivation came from our own work exerted during the last two decades on the computer oriented experiments and remote experiments. We have realized that the existence of the computer oriented experiments based on the hardware and software system ISES [10] and remote experiments built on the same system [11] enable to introduce the new strategy of education conditioned by these new teaching tools.

Let us discuss the possibilities. The traditional strategy of education of physics, which may be called "teaching of the rules", based on the teaching of the physics laws, their mathematical formulations for ideal and idealistic conditions, consequences and explanation of observed phenomena. Lectures, seminaries and laboratory exercises are subordinate to this scheme, leading to the rather rigid structure of the roles of both the teacher and the student, leaving sparse space for the independent and exploratory work of students. The manifestation of this are the recipes in both the seminaries and laboratory exercises, where the deviations from the prescribed "trajectory" is not rewarded but often penalized. This requires little student engagement with the content, and as in [12] authors commented, "Students can be successful in their laboratory class even with little understanding of what they are actually doing". In [13] the authors suggested that the recipe lab "omits the stages of planning and design" and it encourages 'data processing' rather than 'data interpretation'. The examinations as the only feedback about the success of the education are then concentrated on the memorization and mechanical enumeration of the basic laws and emerging concepts and much less on the creativity of the students.

The complementary strategy of education is actually copied from the method, sciences use in their cognitive work. We may call it "teaching of research". The evolution diagram is quite different from the first mentioned strategy, as it based on the observations of phenomena of the real world, with the processing and interpretation of ensuing data and their presentation, search for relevant information, its classification and storing. Only then come the explanation and the mathematic formalism of generalized laws and their consequences. The teachers are not bound by strict rules of the teaching unit; some unveiled problems may be left for the students independent and project work. For the teaching process is decisive the active participation of students, whose involvement may be strengthened by dynamical animations simulating the real phenomena by simplified models. Indispensable part of this approach is the project work, public presentations and defence of achieved results.

We are introducing Integrated e-Learning with the following definition: INTe-L is the interactive strategy of teaching and learning based on the observation of the real world phenomena by the real e-experiment, e-simulations, on the principal features of the physic laws and e-teaching tools as interactive e-textbooks, on manuals and instructions providing information and theoretical background for the understanding and quantification of observed phenomena.

The implementation of such a scheme into the teaching of physics is very demanding, attainable only with a decisive support of ICT, as now the remote experiments across the Internet in e-laboratories are available for real world phenomena observations [14], Java or Flash applets in form of e-simulations [9] for the dynamical animations and for the required information and theory supply e-textbooks exist [15] [16]. With this on mind we suggest and already have started to practice the INTe-L and

want to present the first results of the combined effort of several universities in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

# COMPONENTS AND FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH INTE-L

The constituting components of INTe-L are, based on our definition and interpretation of INTe-L, as follows:

#### **Remote e-experiments**

The remote (or hand on) experiments. The technical achievements of ICT enable to build now Internet e-laboratories – comprising the set of real interactive experiments, globally distributed, accessible from any Internet connected computer, using the common web services (as web browser) [11][14]. This educational technology, till recently not available, enables to introduce the method of complex study of real world phenomena based on the data collection, their processing and evaluation and comparing with the models (see our e-laboratory on www.ises.info).

#### e- simulations

The e-simulations and modelling using both Internet available and home made Java or Flash applets [17]. They serve for the demonstration and explaining of the observed phenomena and functioning of the concomitant physics laws. Surprisingly, the vast majority of applet simulations do not provide data output, needed for the comparison of real experiments and models. We try to compile for the multipurpose simulation applets providing the data outputs for the support (or contradiction) of the measured data with the model once.

## e- textbooks

The e-textbook covering the theory, solved problems and exercises, glossary for quick orientation in the theory covered, multiple-choice tests with immediate evaluation of the acquired knowledge [15]. Recently, the INTe-L course in Mechanics using LMS (Learning Management System) MOODLE was introduced using the general scheme of INTe-L, i.e e-remote laboratory (www.ises.info), e-simulations and e-textbooks [16].

We intend to demonstrate the first experiments in the teaching physics using INTe-L on three teaching units from quite different parts of physics course, namely Electromagnetic induction, Oscillations and Photovoltaics. The details about the remote experiments, their philosophy and their ICT are published elsewhere [11], we give here only short introductory information. The experiments are running on the server-client scheme, using normal web pages and web browser and Java support, no extra hw or sw is necessary on client (student) side. The experiments are unique in available data transfer, also using the standard web page; the students can choose the range and the time interval of the wanted data for the subsequent processing and evaluation.

## **Teaching unit Electromagnetic induction**

The teaching unit examines the connection of time varying magnetic and electric fields into one entity of electromagnetic field, with the focus on the time varying magnetic fields and the ensuing consequences. The central for this unit is the Faraday's law of electromagnetic induction. Remote experiment - Faraday's law

(http://kdt20.karlov.mff.cuni.cz/ovladani\_2\_en.html)

The start of the lecture in teaching unit Electromagnetic induction is introduced with remote experiment as an observation of real world phenomenon, loaded with noise and other real world phenomena. To demonstrate the Faraday's law by remote experiment [21],



(Figure 1) the coil is rotating in the homogeneous magnetic field (view in left top panel) at the constant but arbitrary variable frequency (see controls for the changing

the frequency of rotation and corresponding driving voltage for the motor) and the resulting instantaneous electromotive voltage (right top panel) are transferred to the web page of the experiment. The data, collected (left bottom panel) and the corresponding time representation (right bottom panel). The web page is supplemented by the text, providing the necessary theory and resources.

It is worth mentioning that the experiment may be used in different phases of the lecture (motivation, discussion, phenomenon evaluation etc.). Besides, it may be introduced in computational lesson and laboratory exercise and also for project work of students (see the sample of the evaluation from the project work in Figure 2), self study and preparation for examination and with advantage during the examinations [18].

## e-simulation - Faraday's law

The e- simulation of the phenomenon comes next in the lecture. For this purpose we use the sophisticated and very useful applets provided by the PhET - Colorado university project [9]. Using the simulations we present the model of the above demonstrated real world experiment. Here the students may qualitatively observe and study the influence of variable parameters of the setup. We



FIGURE 3 Faraday's law in action in the Colorado applet simulation [9]

press on the students to examine and verify the validity of the physics laws in "action" in their seminaries and project work.

## e- textbooks

The lesson then continues using the necessary theoretical framework presentation by the teacher, using the data collected during the presentation. For this purpose the e-textbook is used, in this case the textbook compiled by the team of Slovak physics teacher, covering the basic physics course [19]. Students are encouraged to use throughout their study of physics in seminaries, laboratory work and preparation for examinations. The major advantage, appreciated by students, is availability across the Internet and its lucidity.

## **Teaching unit Oscillations**

Oscillations of oscillators constitute one of the most important parts of physics. The goal of the basic course of Physics in the chapter of Oscillations is to show the oscillatory movement as a basis of nearly all natural phenomena. The unifying model for all real world systems then may be the mass-spring system constituting the driven mechanical oscillator.

# **Remote experiment – Oscillations**

## (http://kdt-17.karlov.mff.cuni.cz/pruzina en.html)

In our illustration of Integrated e- Learning in the practical teaching process the starting point of the lecture is the remote experiment of the forced oscillations available across the Internet [20] (Figure 4 and Figure 5). There can be studied both free damped and forced oscillations and such phenomena as the resonance or energy coupling of oscillator to the driving force.



FIGURE 4 REPRESENTATION OF THE REMOTE EXPERIMENT OSCILLATIONS WITH ISES HARDWARE



FIGURE 5 The web page of the remote experiment Oscillations with life web camera view (top left), graph of the time representations and controls

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The transferred data give information about frequency and instantaneous value of the driving force and the instantaneous deflection giving both amplitude of the forced oscillations and their corresponding phase. The usage of the experiment is manifold, determining the own frequency of the oscillator, its damping, the resonance, the amplitude and phase transfer functions and e.g. the energy transfer from the source of the driving force to the oscillator. If used in the student's laboratory, the students are encouraged to process the acquired data and evaluate the requested quantities of the model oscillator and



FIGURE 0 ENERGY TRANSFER FROM THE DRIVING FORCE GENERATOR TO THE OSCILLATOR, ON THE FREQUENCY OF THE DRIVING FORCE, PARAMETER IS THE DAMPING (BLUE-HIGHER, RED-LOWER)

discus the obtained results and critically assess the errors of the measurements. In Figure 6 is depicted the energy transferred from the driving force generator to the oscillator, depending on the frequency of the driving force, parameter is the damping. The students are encouraged to find examples of the energy transfer in the Nature phenomena and in technique. Such experiments may be also with advantage used for self-study of students, during examinations and may be very useful for the part time students, where laboratories are not a standard.

#### E-simulation - Oscillations (http://www.walter-fendt.de/ph14e/resonance.htm)

In the simulation nearly identical observations to that of the above-presented remote

experiment may be carried out. Forced oscillations in Figure 7, providing the same sets of the data as depicted in Figure 4 or Figure 6, compiled by Walter Fendt [22] from the University of Magdeburg. The Java applet (Figure 5) provides the simple schematic dynamic view of the oscillator; its driving force (red) and weight deflection (blue) and their corresponding time representations in the graph. The adjustable parameters are spring stiffness, mass of the weight and attenuation with driving force frequency.



EXAMPLE OF THE SIMULATION - FORCED OSCILLATIONS SEE [22]

## **Teaching unit Photovoltaics**

The third teaching unit we present here is the Photovoltaics. Besides solid state physics, it has at present a strong environmental justification. This unit serves as an example of the possibility to teach by INTe-L also more abstract, scientific in nature and theory oriented topics from material science and solid state physics.

## Remote experiment-Photovoltaic cell (http://kdt-4.karlov.mff.cuni.cz/fotodioda.html)

As the third example we present the remote experiment Photovoltaic (PV) cell characterization in Figure 8 and Figure 9. This is a popular real world experiment interesting both from the physical and environmental views. We have recently devised the more sophisticated version of this experiment as an example of the possibility to use remote experiments in Material Science [23]. The students were encouraged to study the quality factor of the dark current *I-U* characteristic of the photovoltaic cell and fill factor of the illuminated device that is decisive for the efficiency of the radiation to electrical energy transformation. The measurements are straightforward; the focus is then laid on the data evaluation. The extra variable parameter is then the intensity of light of the PV element. The students faced no problems with data transfer, but had to cope with some problems as to the physical phenomena involved and data evaluation.



WEB PAGE OF THE REMOTE EXPERIMENT PHOTOVOLTAIC CELL CHARACTERIZATION WITH CONTROLS, LIFE WEB CAMERA PICTURE AND GRAPH OF THE *I-U* CHARACTERISTICS





*I-U* CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CELL FOR ILLUMINATION WITH THREE RELATIVE LIGHT INTENSITIES: L (TRIANGLES), 0,7 L (CIRCLES) AND 0,4 L (SQUARES)

#### **E-simulation - Photovoltaic cell**

We use for this unit the excellent applet from ANU in Canberra providing support solar radiation data for the solar cell devise and its energy output [24] http://solar.anu.edu.au/EduResources/applets/help/PVguide.html

All three units of INTe-L were delivered for three groups of students of three Universities - majors in physics, distant students in mechanical engineering and students

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of foodstuffs. We choose different major specialisations of students as their attitude and previous knowledge and motivation to physics course was quite different. It is premature to try to summarize the impact and the effectiveness of the newly applied strategy of education. As we found, the prerequisites for the application of INTe-L are the carefully prepared supporting materials, cooperative interplay of all cooperating teachers in lecture, seminary and laboratory exercise and perfect function of all the ICT.



FIGURE 10 The simulation applet for the determintion of Sun radiation flux [24]

The students were positively surprised, active and involved. In every case all of them were given projects topics either from remote e-experiments or e-simulations with written reports and with some of them delivering their results to the teaching group in form of presentations. The faculty competition of the best student work in physics was then organized with excellent presentations. During the examinations both remote experiments and simulations were used for the interactive communication on a practical problem with the teacher.

# DISCUSSIONS OF BENEFITS OF INTE-L

Among the teachers of physics exists the prevailing opinion for the necessity of physics teaching strategy change. In their recent paper on the physics education transformation, C. Wieman and K. Perkins [1] ask the general question "Is there a way to teach physics that does not produce such dismal results for the typical student?" and give the positive answer by claiming "By using the tools of physics in their teaching, instructors can move students from mindless memorization to understanding and appreciation". Many educationalists solve this problem by different approaches, many of them by the increased role of laboratories - either real computer oriented [25], real e-laboratories across the Internet [14] or virtual laboratories and simulations [17].

We also adhere to the opinion, laboratories and simulations can deeply change the education in physics, but new strategy, including these new teaching tools, is needed. For that reason, we suggest the method of Integrated e- Learning and the question arises, if INTe-L solves the present difficulties in physics teaching and complies with the findings, physics education researchers bring for the effectiveness of education process [26]. The prospective methods of teaching, including INTe-L, should comply with the general piece of knowledge coming from cognitive research that

 Students should be provided by a suitable organizational structure, based on his/her prior thinking and experience and starting from their own research results, not simply pouring facts on them and not addressing the simple questions "what", but rather "why". On top of this, previous knowledge must be carefully checked and examined and possible misconceptions dispelled. The ultimate goal in this respect should be the active thinking, active exploratory work, guided by the active role of the teacher, conditioned by the double-sided interaction student – teacher.

- 2. The traditional teaching of " the rules" brings the excessive amount of new material that is far more than a typical person can process or learn. The more cognitive load the brain is given, the less effectively it can process anything and at the same time is blocked for processing and mastering new ideas. This is one of the most well established and widely violated principles in education, including by many education researchers in their presentations. Any new method that should bring remedy to the situation and maximize learning should minimize the cognitive load by minimizing the amount of presented material, well organized structure of the presentations and making link to the already known to the audience ideas.
- 3. The third important criterion concerns the students and public believes about physics education and physics importance for the society. If the belief about the purely abstract and not coping with the problems of the real world prevail, it deeply influences the approach towards the physics as a subject and the necessity of its mastering.

How the INTe-L copes with these three criteria? The first above mentioned criterion meets INTe-L by its starting point, observations, irrespective if it is traditional computer based laboratory, remote real e-laboratory across the Internet or virtual e-laboratory [27]. The real experiments strongly support the examination of real world. On the other hand, the virtual laboratories or simulations support an interactive approach, employ dynamic feedback, follow a constructivist approach, provide a creative workplace, make explicit otherwise inaccessible models or phenomena, and constrain students productively [28].

The cognitive load in INTe-L is limited by supporting the individual comprehension processes offering manifold accesses to knowledge and being individually adaptive, offering significant advantages in the individual rates of teaching progress. Traditional teaching scenarios cannot satisfy this requirement, particularly because of capacity issues. INTe-L environments meet these needs. The possibility of making abstract objects and concepts tangible by application to real and virtual laboratories demonstrates this qualitative change in education and brings the diminishing of the cognitive load of students [4].

In the fulfilment of the third criterion, INTe-L brings, are the qualities and skills the students acquire studying physics courses for their future study and professional carriers. We tried to cope with this problem in a separate paper [27]. In practical teaching it means assigning problems that are graded strictly on a final number, or that can be done by plugging the correct numbers into a given procedure or formula, can teach students that solving physics problems is only about memorization and coming up with a correct number—reasoning and seeing if the answer makes sense are irrelevant. The good news is that courses with rather modest changes to explicitly address student beliefs have avoided the usual negative shifts. Those changes include introducing the physics ideas in terms of real-world situations or devices with which the students are familiar; recasting homework and exam problems into a form in which the answer is of some obvious utility rather than an abstract number; and making reasoning, sense-making, and reflecting explicit parts of in-class activities, homework, and exams [1].

The easier access of majorities and disabled to the physics education is also contributing, including globalisation features. Technologies are a prerequisite for the continuous integration of internationalised studies: transparency of course content forms the basis for the international recognition of academic achievements, eases the formulation of rules of acknowledgement for studies in foreign countries, making a stay abroad considerably easier to manage and realise. Geographical proximity, previously a prerequisite for intensive cooperation, is diminishing in impact.

Application of new media and new technologies has resulted in a significant impact on research. Today ICT is the technical foundation to access scientific sources and data. Interdisciplinary questions are getting more important and the possibility for interdisciplinary communication and cooperation plays a significant role.

# SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The examination of the effectiveness of INTe-L is under way. For this purpose we apply standard pedagogical methods of inquiry and questionnaire, the log in protocols in remote experiments and the records of remote experiments measurements.

Our ultimate goal is to prepare the basic physics course curriculum with the above mentioned scheme, using the remote e-experiments, e- simulations and e-textbook. For this the corresponding set of remote experiments is prepared [29] "Standing waves in the resonator", "Mathematical forced oscillations", "Oscillations in RCL circuits", "Magnetic field generation and mapping", "Electrochemical sources of energy", "Free fall in gasses and liquids" to those already functioning "Controlling of the liquid level "," Monitoring the environment in Prague ","The electromagnetic induction "," The forced mechanical oscillator", "Diffraction of microobjects"," Heisenberg principle of uncertainty", "Characterization of the photovoltaic device".

The great advantage seems the necessary support of the University authorities and the Accreditation commission for these activities. The infrastructure of the teaching process must be changed accordingly, the whole potential offered by the INTe-L only if it is embedded in the academic structure.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Our long lasting activities in the computer based laboratory system software and hardware system ISES exploitation [25], remote e-laboratories building using ISES [29], together with the stimulating activities on transformation of physics education elsewhere [1] [4] gave rise to our incentives to devise and suggest the strategy of education INTe-L that may positively influence teaching of physics.

In general, the INTe-L complies with the general criteria physics education researchers suggest for the effectiveness of education process

- suitable organizational structure, based on his/her prior thinking and experience,
- it reduces the cognitive load by supporting the individual comprehension processes offering manifold accesses to knowledge and being individually adaptive,
- it positively addresses the students and public believes about physics education and physics importance for the society.

The INTe-L, as new strategy of education, calls for deep changes in the University life as the infrastructure of the teaching process must be changed accordingly as the exploitation

of the whole potential offered by the INTe-L may be employed only if it is embedded in the academic structure.

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