

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

New learning methods – such as Problem Based Learning, Project Based Learning, Computer Based Learning, etc. – have been intensely promoted lately in higher education institutions worldwide, also considering their relevance as a specific and necessary support for the learning process, as well as for the self-assessment and implementation of theoretical knowledge. In this respect, the virtual world provides an optimum context for highly efficient a learning process. The expansion of virtual laboratories represents an equally efficient and effective investment for all fields of study. This new technology – characterized by maximum flexibility in the process of learning and quick access to the changes and modernization entailed by scientific or technological progress – provides the opportunity of intensive use of specialized virtual laboratories to all knowledge creators and beneficiaries.

These laboratories enable the user to become familiar with the virtual equipment and processes facilitated by modelling and simulation methods.

Any appropriate technical endowment of conventional academic laboratories represents an excessively expensive alternative unlikely to be chosen by any university, however rich in financial resources. Not even the budget of the wealthiest countries could financially support the annual acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment generated by the latest advances in science and technology. The costs incurred by an updated technical endowment would be unimaginably high, thus the best solution is the development of virtual laboratories, particularly for bachelor degree study programs.

A complete learning process, though, can never be achieved solely in virtual laboratories hence partnerships with the business community are a prerequisite for the acquisition and implementation of state-of-the-art equipment.

In view of achieving competitiveness, organizations are committed to accomplishing quality products, with maximum output coefficient and minimum cost, therefore they are willing to purchase the cutting edge technology, equipment and installation, whereas higher education institutions should be primarily focused on know-how creation and dissemination to economy, according to the principles of any win-win partnership.

Let us not forget, therefore, that change triggers progress and it is also the result of innovation and entrepreneurship.

We may conclude that the innovative capability of an organization is given by:

- the ability of an organization to adapt and implement successfully and sustainably new ideas, processes and products
- the significant set of features of an organization that facilitate and support the innovation strategies
- the ability to mobilize knowledge through all actors involved in the innovation processes.

The development of a culture of innovation requires a healthy thinking on behalf of all stakeholders involved in the process of information creation and its capitalization into knowledge, i.e. new products and technologies.

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