

ASPECTS OF PHYSICS COMPETITIONS IN THAILAND: UPSIDES, DOWNSIDES AND OVERCOMING

Wittaya Kanchanapusakit

Presenting Author: Wittaya Kanchanapusakit (wittaya.kan@kmutt.ac.th)
Department of Physics, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Today, innovation is called for, and science competition is one of the places where new ideas are illuminated. For scientists, competition (such as for funding or resources) attracts the international talents, but it might have a detrimental effect on advances in science. This poses similar concerns about learning and the whole process of training students for science competition. For students, the science competition is an enrichment program to sharpen skills. The benefits are also for teachers as well as the teaching community. In Thailand, International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) and International Young Physicists' Tournament (IYPT) are the two familiar competitions. The events are well-received, triggering several competitions at the national level. The high intensity of the competition identifies the brightest students. The widespread demand requires the teachers to prepare for coaching.

In this talk, I will discuss recent efforts not only to improve student performance, but also to enhance teacher skills for the physics competitions in Thailand. Despite all the merits of the competitions, there are downsides. Gender gap and lack of creativity are among some others. Ways to overcome are proposed and implemented.

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