

Editorial

This is the fourth issue of the OUSL Journal after a period of silence. The re-emergence of the OUSL Journal, the Journal of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) however demonstrates our commitment towards maintaining and improving the quality and standards of research. The importance of research, is in fact highlighted in the corporate plan of the OUSL, and affirms the efforts of the institution in trying to establish excellence in teaching and learning through inquiry and investigation into issues and problems of academic importance.

The articles presented in this issue represent a variety of issues pertinent to universities in our country in general and in particular, relevant to the OUSL as an ODL Institution.

The first paper focuses on a topic of importance common to both conventional universities as well as to OUSL, viz: academic standards in English. In their paper, Raheem et al, investigate the performance on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), of doctors registered at the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine. The paper investigates ability in the language skills posited by the IELTS, and reports on what was achieved after an eight-month training programme. The paper highlights the need for skills training in the English language for all students, especially those involved in a professional degree such as Medicine.

We are particularly pleased that this volume presents three papers of significance to Information and Communication technology (ICT). ICT has become an integral part of academic life- of students, of teachers and of the general public. It has brought enormous opportunities as well as complex challenges for higher education. These include the expansion of opportunities to education, instant access to knowledge and media resources and the reduction of geographical distance. The challenges wrought by this revolution in teaching/learning include widening of access, a paradigm shift in teaching and learning, and the intricacies of designing and developing online materials using student-centred approaches.

Karunanayaka, in her paper reports the challenges faced by teacher educators when designing and developing web-based learning environments and comments on how teachers cope with “change” in the new learning paradigm. Dissanayake et al. on the other hand, report on the development of a computer framework for teaching abstract mathematical concepts and the application of this computer package by students. Based on their findings they suggest that this computer-based framework could be used as a generic framework to teach mathematics at the primary schools.

The study by Karunananda discusses the importance of IT education, the challenges of offering IT courses and suggestions on how opportunities to offer IT courses through ODL methodologies could be expanded.

In the past, the OUSL Journal has tended to focus on ODL-based research. In this volume however we depart from that tradition and include a scientific paper on organic chemistry to encourage discipline-based researchers. Perera, in his paper discusses the importance of metal-ligand interactions in chemical and biological processes. The present study describes the preparation of some ruthenium complexes with ligands containing both phosphorus and nitrogen donor atoms. These arene-complexes are expected to exhibit interesting catalytic properties.

As with the previous volume, we have also included addresses made at OUSL convocations. These addresses, seven in number, were delivered by eminent local and foreign researchers who have made exceptional contributions to Open Distance Learning, the growth and development of the Open University and to academia in general.

We hope these papers would interest our readers and stimulate discussion and evaluation of the views expressed by the authors.

We welcome suggestions for the improvement of this Journal. We also look forward to research contributions on ODL and other academic disciplines for this journal for its future issues.

Editor in Chief