

## **Editorial**

Publishing a peer-reviewed academic journal has been a long-felt requisite for the Faculty of Education of the University of Colombo, given its history as one of the pioneering teacher education institutes in the Sri Lankan higher education system. Further, there is a rarity in the volume of education academic journal publications in Sri Lanka. The past years saw the Faculty of Education releasing magazines where education research articles written by both academics and students were published. But this was more or less limited to those who were affiliated to the faculty.

The need to move beyond the boundaries of the Faculty of Education and invite educational researchers from all corners has been a long-awaited obligation for many years. This necessity became stronger toward the end of the 1990s with the impact of globalization on education and the consequent reforms in the education sector. In a globalized world where the free movement of labor became the key aspect, the employment patterns and workplace processes evolved rapidly. Being flexible, innovative, and entrepreneurial and, above all, competitive were main characteristics expected of individuals joining a labor market which is constantly changing. The manner, degree and pace at which education systems were adjusting themselves to meet these new and challenging demands became constantly contested topics in articles in education journals published across the world. A large volume of articles as well as edited books on both empirical and theoretical studies about globalization and education was published globally. A journal particularly by the Faculty of Education and dealing with educational issues in the aftermath of globalization would provide an ideal platform for researchers (both young and new) to present the findings of their research studies during the global education transitory period from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The discipline of education as an academic field is rather undetermined in the Sri Lankan higher education sector whereas in most developed and developing countries a faculty or a department of education makes an integral part of a university. Only eight universities deal with educational sciences in Sri Lanka and the scarcity of journals in the field in the Sri Lankan context, therefore, compels researchers to publish the findings of their research projects in other local journals of social sciences and management. The tendency in local universities that do not offer degree programs in education to set apart a theme for education when they host international conferences has grown exponentially. This is a clear indication of their own admission of education as an important academic discipline.

An academic journal is an open sesame for exchanging knowledge among the researchers. Getting a research project published in an accredited journal holds benefits for both the researcher and the institution hosting the journal. It is through publication that the research findings are disseminated to others in a particular field. Postgraduate students registered at the Faculty of Education for advanced degrees such as M. Ed, M.Phil. and Ph.D

have completed numerous research studies whose findings are of vital significance. But most of such findings have been confined into libraries. Sri Lanka Journal of Education is a very good portal particularly for these advanced students to disseminate their research findings while it also becomes quite useful for any educational researcher to bring to focus their salient research findings notwithstanding of the affiliation in general.

The Journal publishes theoretical and empirical analyses of educational policy issues and recent developments in the field of education both locally and internationally. It particularly focuses on research articles dealing with educational contexts which are directly or indirectly influenced by global discourses.

This inaugural issue contains seven articles that bring together themes ranging from the language of instruction in education through inequality in academic achievement to professional learning and development for higher education in the global south. In her article, Birgit Brock-Utne questions the use of colonial languages as media of instruction in former European colonies both in Africa and Asia. Many years after getting independence from colonial masters and despite millions of speakers, none of the key African languages has been able to function as a language of instruction in education to a satisfactory level in any African country, an issue linguistic human rights groups have repeatedly brought forward. Brock-Utne carefully examines how English was creating a yet another caste, the English knowing caste, into the already caste-ridden Indian society by quoting Nehru who fought hard against the caste system in India. While being very cognizant about the use of local languages as media of instruction in education in Sri Lanka and the subsequent positive outcomes the country has witnessed, she is also critical about the trends in education in her own country, Norway, where English is increasingly becoming the most preferred language of higher education and academic publishing.

Lalitha Kumari's article focuses on an important aspect of the role of the principal as a supervisor considering Type 2 and Type 3 schools in Sri Lanka. In this respect, she provides a comprehensive overview of instructional supervision and its impact on raising teacher quality which will eventually lead to improved student performance. Her findings are encouraging as the principals of the above schools are found to have positive attitude toward instructional supervision. Yet, we are dismayed by the fact that too much administrative work has constrained these principals from taking an active role in the instructional supervision programs even though they have formed such programs and supervisory teams in their schools.

Jeevani Herath's article, on the other hand, examines how school types create inequality among students in terms of their educational achievement. She points out that school type has a direct influence on student achievement levels. Her article, based on data collected by the National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC), examines the impact of human capital, social capital and financial capital on educational achievement of students. The

findings of the study bring forth significant trends concerning capital and performance in school education. The study concludes that a combination of both home and school capital could improve educational achievement of students.

Upeksha Rathnasena's article on her action research that was conducted to improve the ability of using pre-nominal possessive forms accurately in the writing of the grade 7 students in a government school provides useful suggestions and guidelines for teachers of English to follow when intervening with their students to remedy the inaccurate use of pre-nominal possessive forms. She prompts teachers to use language games while using different pedagogical approaches highlighting the importance of using inductive methods to teach grammar.

Kapila Bandara, in his article, examines the need to introduce student-directed learning (SDL) to the Sri Lankan higher education system and assesses the policy initiatives that have been taken in this regard by the authorities. He explores the feasibility of implementing such policies and observes the challenges faced by both academics and the higher education recipients in the process of such implementation. His findings conclude that students receiving higher education have positive attitudes toward SDL while most of the academics were skeptical about it due to the challenges they face because of examination-oriented teaching and assessment techniques, large numbers of students enrolled in courses, and inadequacy of time.

Pushpa Vitharana and Visaka Lindakumbura investigate the experiences and challenges encountered by postgraduate students in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is apposite as it endeavors to determine the reaction and responses of the postgraduate students toward online learning during the troubled times. Their findings are promising as most of the postgraduate students have positive attitudes toward the online learning experience. Further, flexibility of participation in online lectures and the hazard-free procedure in taking online courses are some other reasons that enticed them to develop favorable attitudes toward online learning. However, the authors also state that some students were not happy with online learning as class discussions and student-teacher interactions were not as vigorous as in face-to-face teaching. Furthermore, poor Internet connection was found to be the biggest obstacle faced by the students during online learning and this is a challenge identified in most other studies conducted across Sri Lanka not only in higher education learning but also in school education as well.

In line with Birgit Brock Utne, Indika Liyanage, Rohan Abeywickrama and Hashini Abeysena in their article, show how our educational practices are shaped and even determined by global educational discourses in the North. These discourses, according to them, are linear models of professional learning and development (PLD) that overemphasize the 'importation' of 'quality teaching practices' which at institutional level translates into teaching and research. Such traditions are generally seen as essential to institutional, and often individual survival in

competitive national, regional, and global higher education (HE) environments. The academic excellence thus expected is usually received by academics in the outer Anglosphere by making short or long-term academic ‘sojourns’ to HE institutes in the North. However, the authors draw our attention to the opportunity we have at present at the backdrop of COVID-19 travel restrictions to reorient ourselves in exploring ‘home-grown alternatives’ in promoting professional learning and development to achieve quality and excellence in teaching and research while connecting constructively with the international research community as well. In this instance, the authors argue how higher educators bring about effective teacher learning required for the delivery of quality teaching and learning based on key principles of reflexive practitioner action research (PAR).

Thus, the very first issue of the SLJE presents a cogent dissemination of findings related to several critical aspects of education providing the reader with a wide scope of opportunity to be informed about current issues in education in the developing world. It is very much hoped that SLJE, therefore, will inspire you to share the findings of your education research studies.

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