

Editorial

The first volume of VISTAS, the Journal of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences was published in 2002 in pursuance of one of the objectives the Faculty had set for itself – to encourage research and thereby to contribute to transform the quality of education in our University. This year, VISTAS is published as a collaborative effort of two Faculties – the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the newly-established Faculty of Education in the spirit of solidarity with which their constituent Departments functioned earlier. In the second volume of VISTAS also we have attempted to maintain the representation of the different disciplines in the two Faculties as we did in the first volume.

The multitude of issues related to the areas of specialization in each of the disciplines in our two Faculties that have emerged are being aggravated and compounded by local and international forces operating at present. More than half a century after re-gaining independence, Sri Lanka like most other developing countries are still grappling with problems of economic under-development, income disparities, social inequity and violations of human rights, especially women's and children's rights. Even impressive achievements in education and health resulting from far-reaching progressive policies targeting social welfare in Sri Lanka have not been successful in containing the above issues. Globalization accompanied by liberal market economic policies, on the other hand, though resulting in accelerated economic growth have yet denied the fruits of this growth to the large proportions of the impoverished, disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the country. This scenario has presented several researchable issues to academics in the country.

Of the five articles included in this volume, one investigates the use of media in Open and Distance Learning. This article from Salma Karim and Md. Mayinul Islam from a sister Open University in Bangladesh has much relevance to our own Sri Lankan discourses on the extent to which print material, tutorial classes, radio and television programmes are perceived as effective by a sample of postgraduate students.

Cameena Guneratne moving away from the local setting, examines the aspects of the Right to Life in Indian law. She focuses on selected procedural and substantive aspects of constitutional developments including interpretations of the Right and its attributes as well as the factors that impacted on such developments. Her discussion can be used as a parameter for reviewing the gaps and shortcomings in the Sri Lankan constitutional provisions and for proposing required amendments.

Upali Vidanapathirana inquires into the fundamental issues which to a large extent determines the quality of life of people in poverty. In a case study of a village in Hambantota District, he uses cross-sectional data and in-depth interviews to identify the poverty status and trends and patterns of economic mobility. Vidanapathirana argues that processes such as assets depletion and perpetuation of poverty causes income as well as human poverty among the peasantry.

Dayalatha Lekamge and Chandra Gunawardena present the findings of a comparative study which looked at the attributes of men and women leaders in the University of Colombo and the Open University. The article examines the significance of the differences between male and female leaders in four leadership attributes in relation to their background characteristics. The conclusion that men and women leaders do not exhibit more traditional male or female leadership attributes clearly indicates the need to draw more females into management positions.

Viviemarie Medawattegedara focuses on the effect of discourse markers on the listening comprehension of a sample of university students. Recommendations made by her would be extremely useful for language teachers as well as for teacher educators.

Though limited in number, the articles in the second issue of the VISTAS would stimulate debate and discussion among researchers and practitioners in Distance Education, Human Rights Law, poverty studies, language teaching and gender studies and can inform decision makers for follow-up action.