SUBJECT REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF
SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

17th to 19th February 2010

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1. SUBJECT REVIEW PROCESS

This report presents the findings of the subject review of the Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education (DSTE), Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) conducted during the period 17th to 19th of February 2010 under the guidance of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka. The subject review evaluates the quality of education within a specific subject or discipline. It is focused on the student learning experience and student achievement, and designed to evaluate the quality of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However, the responsibility for quality and standards lies within the institution itself, since it alone has the power to control and to change existing practices.

The review process was conducted according to the guidelines given in the *Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities,* published by the CVCD and UGC in July 2002. The DSTE, Faculty of Education (FoE), OUSL, submitted a Self Evaluation Report (SER) consisting of five sections, namely,
1. Introduction
2. Aims, Learning Outcomes and Programme details
3. Students, Staff and Facilities
4. The Evaluation
    4.1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review
    4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods,
    4.3 Quality, Student Progress and Achievement
    4.4 The Extent and Use of Student Feedback
    4.5 Postgraduate Studies
    4.6 Peer Observation
    4.7 Skills Development
    4.8 Academic Guidance and Counseling
5. Conclusion

The quality of education was reviewed according to the aims and learning outcomes given in the SER. The following eight aspects of education were reviewed at the subject level:
1. Curriculum design, content and review
2. Teaching, learning and assessment methods
3. The quality of students including student progress and achievements
4. The extent and use of student feedback, qualitative and quantitative
5. Postgraduate studies
6. Peer observation
7. Skills development
8. Academic guidance and counseling

The review team visited the department from 17th to 19th February, 2010. The agenda of the three day visit is attached (see annex 1).
The evaluation of the eight above aspects was based on (see Annex 2 and 3):

- Meeting held with the QA Specialist of the QAA Council of the UGC, Sri Lanka;
- Meetings held with the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the OUSL, the Dean of the FoE, the Acting Head, the academic staff, the non-academic staff, Student Counselors and Programme Coordinators, undergraduate students and postgraduate students, all of the Department under review (DSTE), and the staff of the library of the university

- Observation of physical facilities of the Department, lecture rooms, Faculty computer center, seminar rooms, Research Center, Nodes Access Centre, University and Faculty libraries, etc.;
- Presentations of AV Teaching materials, On-line programmes, Video Conference and students' presentations;
- Reviewing research publications and available documents at the Department; and
- The presentation made by the Review Team to the staff of the DSTE on their findings during the review, allowing the reviewers to seek further clarification of certain points.

Each of the eight aspects was judged as good/satisfactory/unsatisfactory, based on strengths, good practices and weaknesses in each.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

The Open University of Sri Lanka

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) was set up for the purpose of providing higher educational facilities to persons above 18 years of age with relevant basic qualifications. Established under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, incorporating within its system the External Services Agency (ESA) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education (SEIDE), the OUSL commenced its operations in 1980. The present activities of OUSL are based on the provisions of the above Act and the Open University of Sri Lanka Ordinance No.1 of 1990, as amended by the Ordinance No.12 of 1996. Currently OUSL operates through 28 Regional Educational Service Centers. The network consists of four regional centers in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Jaffna, seventeen study centers and seven smaller teaching centers. The Central Campus and the Colombo Regional Center of OUSL are situated in Nawala, Nugegoda.

OUSL has the same legal and academic status as any other national university in Sri Lanka. It is the only recognized university in Sri Lanka where students are able to pursue further education by distance education techniques in keeping with the philosophy of Open and Distance Learning. The programmes are conducted by the four Faculties viz. Education, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, through nineteen Departments of Study.

Vision of the University
The OUSL vision is to **be the leader in distance education in South Asia within the first decade of the 21st century and be a premier centre of learning, renowned for excellence.**

Mission Statement
The OUSL mission is **to enhance opportunities for life-long learning of adults through Open and Distance Learning and support excellence in research and scholarship.**

Unlike in conventional universities, the students of the OUSL have to bear a part of the cost of their education. However, the openness of the university with regard to its academic activities makes it an attractive choice for the employed and therefore approximately 80 per cent of the student population today are those who are employed. It also has the largest student population among universities with over 25,000 students on roll.

The organizational structure of the OUSL is similar to that of the conventional universities. In attempting to meet the demands for globalization of education, equality in educational opportunities and provision of lifelong education, OUSL offers 42 programmes with over 900 courses. Apart from the academic departments, there are other units that are under the guidance of the Registrar of the University.

Profile of the Department
The Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education is one of the pioneering departments of the OUSL. It was originally known as the Department of Education and functioned under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Later it became one of the three departments of the Faculty of Education, which was established in 2003.

It currently serves about 4000 students enrolled in eight different programmes, out of which seven are Post Graduate level programmes. The Department also offers a stand-alone online course in Education Technology and a short course in Research Methodology. In addition, the Department is responsible for coordinating two modules of the B.A. in English Language Teaching programme conducted by the Department of Language Studies and was responsible for five modules in the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP).

Currently seventeen academic members and five non-academic staff serve the Department. Around 100 visiting academics and 400 Master Teachers from other Universities, National Colleges of Education, the National Institute of Education and schools help the Department in the conduct of day school sessions, tutorials and teaching practice, and the marking of assignments and answer scripts of the final examination

The Department offered the first Online Course of OUSL, 'Teacher Educator as an Educational Technologist', developed in collaboration with the Distance Education Partnership Programme (DEPP) of the ADB funded Distance Education Modernization Project (DEMP).

'The Commonwealth of Learning Excellence in Distance Education Award for Distance Education Materials - 2008' was won by the Department for its MATE (International) Programme.

Recently, a Research Centre has been established in the Department, with the support of the World Bank. This Centre undertakes national level research studies in education and also supports individual research activities of the staff.

The Department supports the development and enhancement of professional competencies of its staff, by encouraging them to participate in the regular Faculty staff development workshops, and also facilitating them to obtain local and foreign training. Further, training

workshops are held annually for the visiting academics, external marking examiners and master teachers who render academic services to the Department.

Vision and Mission of the Department
The Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education shares the Vision and Mission of the Faculty of Education, as the other two departments. The Vision and Mission of the Faculty are as follows:

Vision
The vision of the Faculty of Education is to be a leader in the advancement of knowledge and professional practice in education as a fundamental human endeavor through open and distance learning in Sri Lanka and in the region.

Mission
The mission of the Faculty of Education is to;
- achieve excellence in research and scholarship in the field of education;
- prepare professionals for service and leadership roles in education and related areas;
- constructively inform educational policy makers and to critically appraise educational policy in Sri Lanka;
- contribute to curriculum development in general and teacher education in particular; and to
- support society to identify and respond to its educational responsibilities and challenges.

3. AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROGRAMME DETAILS

3.1 Aims

As SER of DSTE states, the Sri Lankan national education system needs to address the diverse educational needs of the country while effectively responding to the ever changing regional and global challenges in the field of education. Hence, the system should be equipped with a set of highly competent personnel with updated cognitive abilities as well as relevant skills, right attitudes and values.
In this context the aim of the Department is to provide:
- Postgraduate and undergraduate degree programmes with a view to enhancing professional competencies of personnel serving in the system. The participants in these programmes will be exposed to contemporary   knowledge and trends in educational practice   and advanced research techniques;
- support to graduate degree programmes of other departments of the Faculty as well as of the University in their education components;
- encouragement   and   motivation to students   who show exceptional interest and dedication in their current programmes of study to   make use of the diverse learning opportunities available in the Department   to advance their career through lifelong education;
- a range of increasing opportunities   and facilities to those who could not follow programmes in the conventional universities;

- opportunities for personnel from other departments of the Faculty as well as of the University to follow programmes/ courses in education;
- assistance in staff development activities of the University, particularly n the areas of curriculum development, assessment and evaluation, counselling and research;
- encouragement and support for both the academic and the non-academic staff of the Department to advance their professional competencies through local and foreign training;
- support and assistance to the relevant Ministries and other organizations in their educational activities;
- a friendly, supportive departmental environment that is conducive to effective learning, satisfactory standards and good completion rates.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of its programmes, the Department expects the students to have:
- gained a comprehensive knowledge of philosophical, theoretical and practical aspects of education;
- learnt how this knowledge and understanding can be applied to various relevant situations;
- developed an insight into the specific problems and issues of the education system and gained the capacity to suggest viable solutions and justify them;
- gained necessary skills to undertake research activities in their relevant subject and/or professional areas;
- developed relevant competencies for critical, analytical and self-directed learning;
- acquired necessary intellectual and professional skills to bring about desired institutional and systemic changes.

Programmes offered by the Department
The following Programmes/ Short Courses are currently offered by the Department:
- Master of Philosophy / Doctor of Philosophy in Education
- Master of Arts in Teacher Education (International)
- Master of Arts in Teacher Education
- Master of Education
- Post Graduate Diploma in Education
- Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education
- Bachelor of Education (Natural Sciences)
- Bachelor of Arts (ELT)- 2 modules
- Stand - Alone Online Course (Teacher Educator as an Educational Technologist)
- Short Course in Research Methodology

A summary of all the programmes /short courses currently offered by the Department and their current student numbers are presented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Summary of All Programmes/Short Courses offerred

Programme / Course	Main Target Group	Credit Rating	Duration	Medium	Current Student Number
M.Phil & Ph.D	Researchers in Education		Minimum 03 years	S/T/E	05
MATE (Int.)	Teacher Educators	3	18 months	E	13
MATE	Teacher Educators	3	18 months	S/T/E	50
M.Ed	Teachers, Principals	3	18 months	S/T/E	52
PGDE	Teachers	2 ½	15 months	S/T/E	3800
PGDDE	Practitioners in ODL	2	01 year	E	06
B.Ed	Science/Mathematics Teachers	8	04 years	S/T/E	25
B.A ELT (2 courses)	English Teachers			E	11
Online-ET	Teachers	1/3	06 months	E	19
Research Methodology in Ed	Research Students		03 months	S	22
					3989

Source: DSTE, SER

In addition to the above, the following courses of different programmes are currently being developed as online courses.
Teacher Educator as an Educational Psychologist (MATE-I)
Teacher Educator as a Curriculum Developer (MATE-I)
Teacher Educator as a Teaching-Learning Specialist (MATE-I)
Teacher Educator as a Researcher (MATE-I)
Teacher Educator as an Educational Manager & Leader (MATE-I)
Educational Psychology (PGDE) and Developing Multimedia Learning Materials (PGDDE)

4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

The findings of the review team are presented here under the eight categories specified in the guidelines for subject reviews.

4. 1 Curriculum Design, Content and Review

The Department offers a wide range of programmes for Postgraduate / Higher Degrees, an undergraduate degree programme and a short course. In addition it offers two courses of the Bachelor of Arts (ELT) programme.

The two main programmes offered by the Department are the Master of Education (M.Ed) and the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes. The review team found that in both these programmes the subjects offered are of a sufficiently high academic level. In addition to the modules on Education the students are also provided opportunities to develop skills in English and IT. Thus the programmes provide interdisciplinary elements and are organized so as to make suitable intellectual demands on students. They provide sufficient opportunities for students to obtain knowledge and skills to perform as competent

teachers or practitioners in the field of Education. Thus, overall, both programmes have sufficient breadth and depth to achieve the main objectives of the programmes.

However, the learning outcomes for the two programmes are not specified. The learning outcomes are not specified even in some of the learning materials provided for the students in the M.Ed. programme. Even in some of the recently introduced programmes the syllabuses specify only broad objectives and not the intended learning outcomes. This is a shortcoming in the curriculum design and the review team is unable to come to a decision as to the effectiveness of the content and the design of the curriculum in enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

As mentioned in the SER (p.30) the responsibility for curriculum design, content and review lies primarily with the Faculty Course Development Committee, Programme teams that consist of Course Team Leaders, the Professor of Education, Head of the Department and selected experts/specialists in the relevant subjects. A curriculum revision of the M.Ed. programme had taken place in 2008 with the involvement of subject specialists. However, no major changes have been recommended. Out of the four subjects, in two subjects while the main topics remain, minor changes have been done in the sub sections. No changes have been recommended in the other two subjects. In the review process student feedback obtained from previous batches of students (although available) has not been considered. Nor has there been input from various stakeholders in the field. Further, even after the review, learning outcomes have not been identified. A similar revision had taken place in the PGDE modules in 2001 and they are also being reviewed and updated at present using ADB/DEMP funds. It is recommended that in future a more comprehensive revision of the curriculum with input from all stakeholders be considered.

The Master of Arts in Teacher Education (International) programme has been developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning. It had been initially, continuously monitored and evaluated by an international expert. The learning materials of this course have *won the Commonwealth of Learning Excellence in Distance Education Award for 2008.* It had also undergone external evaluation as a pilot project for the Quality Assurance of Distance Education Programmes of ADB/DEMP and obtained a "very good" rating. However, since 2005 only 09 students have completed this course and the sustainability of the course is at stake at present. The Department claims that according to student feedback the learning materials being in English has been the main reason for high dropout rates. Therefore, the modules are now being translated into Sinhala and Tamil and the course is to be offered from 2010 in all three languages.

The Department has introduced two new programmes during the last two years and is in the process of offering some more programmes including degree programmes. It has also offered online and blended delivery courses. These are innovative and positive features and commendable. However, considering the staff constraints mentioned in the SER (p.10) the review team was concerned about the sustainability of these courses and the effect it would have on the quality of the main courses. The limited numbers enrolled in the new courses and the completion rates of these courses is also a concern. Thus it is recommended that a feasibility study and a needs analysis be conducted before any new courses are offered. At least until more senior academic staff members are available commencement of new courses should be done with caution.

The review committee sincerely hopes that a well organized process adopted for curriculum revision would largely address many of the issues of curriculum design, content and review. The content and rules and regulations pertaining to new curricula and any revisions to the existing curricula should be subject to the approval of the university's statutory bodies like the Curriculum Development Committee, By-Laws Committee, Faculty Board and Senate.

In relation to Curriculum Design, Content and Review the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

4. 2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Teaching – learning activities
The study system adopted by the Department is geared towards guided self-study, where study aid is given to motivate self-learners. To make the best use of this opportunity, learners are expected to arrange their time schedules systematically so as to have adequate time for self-study.

Teaching – learning activities are conducted in the ODL mode based mainly on printed course materials and interactive sessions with both university and external academics. Interactive sessions comprise mainly day schools and contact sessions. Day schools and contact sessions help to break the isolation of students and the monotony of module learning while providing opportunities for socialization.

Day schools and contact sessions for students following the Diploma in Education programme are conducted only at the Regional Centres and Study Centres predominantly by external academics, with training and support from the university. Students following the other programmes attend day schools and contact sessions conducted for them at the university.

Some contact sessions have been made compulsory for students following the Diploma in Education programme which has helped to raise the level of participation to 90 – 10% from low figures reported when these sessions were not compulsory.
Day schools have been made interactive providing opportunities for group work and presentations that help to develop students' communication and presentation skills. The students have expressed a wish for more day school sessions reflecting the effectiveness of the way these
day school sessions are conducted.

Assignments are also utilised as a teaching – learning activity. Assignments have been made practical and activity – based in order to prevent students from merely copying from their modules. The new type of assignments makes the students work in the field to collect information on which the theories they have learnt may be applied.

Modern technological equipment such as multimedia projectors and overhead projectors are available in the teaching laboratories and are being utilised in the teaching – learning activities. Internet facilities are available to students only to a limited extent, especially at the Regional Centres. An expansion in their availability would lead to improving the teaching and learning in the department further.
Members of the Department's academic staff are actively involved in field-based research pertaining to socio-cultural, economic and communication issues. These research

involvements have enabled them to keep abreast of most recent development in their respective fields, and to update their teaching accordingly. The main University library has a sufficient collection of books, periodicals etc. related to the disciplines and the staff has access to a small department library too. The teaching capabilities of the academic staff are improved through the staff development programmes of the OUSL including postgraduate training, regular meetings and specific workshops.

On account of the serious shortage of experienced senior academic staff and the large numbers of students seeking admission to the Diploma in Education programme at almost all Regional and Study Centres contact sessions at these centres are conducted by external academic staff with extremely limited participation of university staff. In spite of the training and support provided the quality of these contact sessions conducted by external academics may still be below the required standard. Further steps, such as continuing professional development programmes even leading to higher degrees may be introduced for the external academic staff.

The students expressed an aversion to being instructed by academic staff who had reached retirement age in their profession. There are two sides to this question. Some retired academics may bring with them very useful knowledge, ability and experience while others may be weaker than younger persons. The Department has to be very careful in selecting retired persons to work with practising teachers. For a long time to come it may not be possible to dispense with the services of retired teachers.

The academic Staff of the Regional Centres brought to our notice that sometimes the teaching and other material required is not received in the best condition possible and at the required time. Such lapses will affect the smooth functioning of the Centres.

The quality and degree of IT support provided to students, especially Master's level students, leaves much to be desired, mainly by way of state-of-the-art equipment and speedier internet facilities. Also, statistical packages, such as the SPSS should be made available.

The physical and technical quality of handouts is not acceptable way as pointed out by students.

The student- staff ratio is badly above the university norms and almost all academic staff members are involved in some sort of administrative work. Therefore, additional staff is needed to conduct existing multidisciplinary degree programmes effectively and introduce new programmes necessary.

Supplementary audio-visual study material is available for certain courses. The AV centre in the library which is an important mode of self study is not fully utilised by the students. It does not appear that sufficient use of media technology available at the Media House is being made for the delivery of learning materials. Even many available audio-video materials are very old and not in a good condition and the quality of the product should be improved.

Assessment methods
Both formative and summative assessment are utilised in all courses / programmes at all levels.

Methods employed in formative assessment are diverse, comprising take – home assignments, activity – based assignments conducted during day school, tests, oral presentations, practice teaching, portfolios, minor projects etc. We have seen evidence of some of these.

Assignments play a very important part in both teaching – learning and assessment. The number of assignments specified for a course depends on the credit rating of the course. Assignments are prepared by the relevant Course Teams and reviewed by senior university academics. Assignments are marked and returned with written and oral comments providing ample feedback. Marks obtained for assignments are taken into consideration when determining the final mark for the course. Students have to obtain a minimum of 40 per cent for the two best assignments in order to obtain eligibility to sit the final examination.

Summative assessment is undertaken by means of semester / year end examinations which in the case of the Diploma in Education course involves teaching practice too. Final examinations are set and moderated by senior academics of the university with whom senior academics from other institutions also may sometimes be associated. Detailed marking schemes, some of which we have seen, are prepared and scripts are double marked. External marking examiners attend annual training programmes.

All the academic programmes conform to the University's credit rating system. The term "credit rating" implies the number of self-study hours that a student has to devote to a particular course.

The review team is of the view that assessment methods of the DSTE are very clear and effective. However credit values and GPA system that is currently adopted in the university system is not in practice in the department.

In relation to Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

4.3 The quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements.

B.Ed students are selected from the Faculty of Science and Technology after completing two years of study while PGDE students are selected on the results of a written examination and an interview. The students generally entering the degree course are heterogeneous with age above 18 years, mostly employed, and mature, implying a mix of quality at entry level. Interaction with one another makes students responsible people.

As the students are permitted to complete a particular course or a programme at their own pace and convenience in accordance with ODL practices, progression from one level to the next level may not be continuous unlike in the case of conventional universities. As students have the flexibility to progress within their own time frames, they may postpone the completion of a particular course or a programme for reasons such as exigencies of work at their work places, family commitments or personal problems. Therefore, the rate of completion is rather discrete and irregular. The completion rate in the MEd programme is very low; however a completion rate of 80 % or more in the PGDE programme can be considered a good rate in this kind of programme.

Most of the PGDE students are gainfully employed in private and public schools. The University offers a gold medal annually to the best performing student at the examination which contributes to the enhancement of quality by encouraging the students to strive hard to give of their best.

The quality of the students is reflected in the number of students who have secured second class upper and lower divisions during the academic years from 2000 to 2009. The English Language competency of students is fairly high as the DSTE has introduced compulsory course modules on English Skills Development.

In relation to Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievement the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

4.4 Extent of Student Feedback

The students attached to DSTE have many avenues to present their feedback formally. They are:

1. Through the student representatives at the FoE Board. However student representatives are reported to be very irregular in attending these meetings.
2. At day schools where students and teachers meet to discuss academic matters.
3. Through the student counselors and programme coordinators.
4. Through the formal questionnaires administered to the students to obtain their response on the courses provided by the department.

Student feedback forms are developed and distributed among students at the end of the semester. In the course units where receiving student feedback is an accepted practice, the information has not been formally analysed even though informally it might have been used for the purpose of improving the quality of the course and evaluating the teacher as well. It is advisable to distribute feedback forms midway in the course so that feedback can be used in a more effective and useful way.

The day school sessions which require involvement of the students in discussion classes under close supervision of the academics of the department is another important occasion that facilitates receiving student feedback. Also, the staff has the opportunity to receive feedback when the students visit the Department for various purposes. The Course Coordinators, who are in charge of each Level, discuss pertinent issues with the students, and help to resolve them in consultation with the Head of Department and other staff members. The Coordinators also liaise with the relevant units in the OUSL's central administration such as Regional Educational Services Division and Student Affairs Division when students are faced with problems. The department does not maintain any records of quantified student feedback data. In such instances, the department has not taken initiatives to ensure that the system is properly in place.

The review team is of the view that this is an aspect that needs to be formalized and strengthened.

In relation to Extent and Use of Student Feedback, Qualitative and Quantitative, the judgment of the team is "SATISFACTORY".

4.5 Postgraduate Studies

Almost all the academic staff members are involved in teaching, supervision and coordination in the several postgraduate diploma and degree programmes offered by the

Department. Many lecturers are affiliated to various local and international associations and professional bodies.

Some members of the academic staff of the department have received foreign training at the postgraduate level. A number of them have also undertaken research and published their findings in both local and international journals, presented papers at international conferences, and published textbooks and other reading materials for local readership. The Departmental contribution to the faculty journal, *Adheeksha* has been substantial. It is noteworthy that many publications have been done jointly contributing to an informal practice of peer observation.

Several postgraduate degree programmes are offered by DSTE. Among the postgraduate degree programmes offered by the Department, M.Ed, MATE and MATE (I) cannot be considered research degrees. They are only higher education degrees with a research component. The students who follow these programmes cannot be considered as research students.

The courses targeting researchers in education are M.Phil and Ph.D. These programmes have been introduced to offer opportunities to students to attain the highest levels in research. Since the inception of these programmes the Department has awarded 02 Ph.D degrees and 04 M.Phil degrees. Currently there are only 04 M.Phil students. External examiners are appointed from other universities in Sri Lanka as well as foreign universities. Once an external examiner was appointed from the University of New South Wales.

Out of a total of 17 staff members there are only 04 with Ph.D degrees and 05 with M.Phil degrees. The Department at present has only 06 Senior Lecturers including the Dean and the Head which limits the intake of research students as admitted by the Department. Postgraduate research is not a very strong section of the Department just now. The shortage of senior teachers who could supervise research students is a constraint on the expansion of research programmes.

In relation to Postgraduate Studies the judgment of the team is " SATISFACTORY".

4.6 Peer Observation

The staff attached to DSTE have many avenues to observe their peers. They are:
1. Participation in meetings of the Quality Circle
2. Serving as Mentors appointed for probationary lecturers
3. Participation in training workshops for newly appointed lecturers to familiarize them with their duties and   responsibilities
4. Participation in regular departmental meetings
5. Participation in programme team meetings.

In daily meetings of the quality circle, all the staff members discuss day to day issues and record the decisions made. Despite the fact that the Department does not have a formalized mode for peer observation, Mentors are appointed for probationary lecturers. The flow of knowledge from the senior lecturers to the junior staff members occurs in the training workshops for newly appointed lecturers with regard to teaching methods, providing guidelines to students regarding assignments, marking of assignments and marking of answer scripts. It is advisable to introduce formal peer observation and use it for teacher evaluation.

Staff meetings and programme team meetings are held regularly and at these meetings considerable time is made available for lecturers to bring up their problems and discuss ideas regarding the courses they teach, and for others to review them. A praiseworthy extent of uniformity and standardization are achieved in the courses offered by the department due to the close collaboration of lecturers in the department. Additionally, collaborative research and publications by members of the department offer another avenue for peer observation.

Moderation of papers and panel marking adds to the opportunities available for peer observation in the department.

In relation to Peer Observation the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

4.7. Skills Development

The Department provides for skills development of its students through manifold activities. These activities are provided through diverse modalities to develop both skills and attitudes. Even though the review team was unable to observe these activities the team is of the view that the following activities are commendable.

- The teaching practice component in the PGDE and BEd programmes develops the teaching skills and positive attitudes in teachers. An innovative practice has been added to this programme recently with the assigning of a mentor to each teacher student. Mentors are selected from among senior teachers in the school where the student teacher is serving.
- Presentation skills of the students are developed in almost all courses where oral presentations are incorporated as components in day school sessions.
- B.Ed, PGDE and PGDDE students are given opportunities to develop their skills in planning and implementing a small scale project.
- ICT training is incorporated in most courses.
- The support of the Language Studies Department is utilized to develop the Second language skills of the students.
- Self reflection skills are developed through learning portfolios in the two MATE courses and reflective journals in the PGDE.
- Research skills are included in MATE, M.Ed. and PGDDE courses. Further a short course in Research Methodology is also offered by the Department.

One of the strengths of the Department, thus, is the diverse opportunities it provides for the development of professional skills through various activities.

However, it would be better if, in the future, more opportunities are provided to M.Ed. students to have hands on experience in using software for data analysis. Further, employer feedback could be sought regarding the skills needed for different professions. Such

information will be helpful in curriculum design in identifying Learning Outcomes for skill development.

In relation to Skill Development the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

4.8 Academic Guidance and Counselling

Academic guidance and counselling is being well provided to students following all programmes mainly by Programme Co-ordinators. All student groups that the reviewers met have assured the reviewers that academic guidance and counselling is being provided well through a number of methods. We have seen the relevant Student Handbook and Prospectus, Study Guides etc. for the different courses. From the time a student applies to join a programme he can obtain all the information he needs at all relevant stages.

A number of arrangements are in place to offer academic guidance and counselling to students. Details on events such as day-schools, academic activities and examinations are disseminated to students mainly by mail. Course information and degree entry requirements are further elaborated as part of the faculty orientation program organized for first year students. It is in this orientation that students get their first formal instructions on the course. Academic staff is readily available to provide guidance and assistance to students, with prior appointment. Initial counselling is given to students at registration. From then onwards necessary facilities are provided throughout the academic year for students to receive guidance and counselling.

This includes individual access to lecturers who can advise students on a wide range of issues from academic matters to personal problems. The students can telephone the Course Co-ordinator and other members of the staff and obtain all the necessary information as well as discuss their problems in respect of the course, from morning until late into the night. All necessary telephone numbers, including mobile telephone numbers have been provided to the students. They can obtain information from the university as well as the faculty web too.
The opportunity for providing academic guidance and counselling has been clearly recognized and utilized by the Department. It is our observation that its outreach potential could be further expanded.

Many teachers, except the most senior academics are compelled to share their office rooms with others. The small crowded rooms do not provide them with the necessary private space that is needed to engage in academic activities. It appeared to be extremely difficult in this situation for academics and students to give and receive individual level guidance and support that is very much needed in a university academic environment.

The need for a personal guidance and counselling service has not so far been felt. The large majority of students are adults of advanced age and quite unlike undergraduate students of conventional universities do not attend the university daily or very frequently.

Aspect Reviewed	Judgment Given
Curriculum Design, Content and Review	Good
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	Good

Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements	Good
Extent and Use of Student Feedback	Satisfactory
Postgraduate Studies	Satisfactory
Peer Observation	Good
Skills Development	Good
Academic Guidance and Counselling	Good

In relation to Academic Guidance and Counselling the judgment of the team is "GOOD".

Considering the information presented in the Self Evaluation Report and during the review process. It was noted that the department has the internal capacity to improve and address much of the deficiencies prevailing at the moment. However, certain structural limitations faced by the department at the time of the review including the inadequate physical space and large student numbers were taken into consideration in arriving at these judgements by the review team.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Strengths/ Good practices
1. Several degree courses are offered.
2. A Faculty curriculum committee is responsible for curriculum revisions.
3. Curriculum revision has taken place recently.
4. Outside experts' assistance is saught in curriculum upgrading.
5. The Curriculum is in multidisciplinary mode enabling students to improve their skills such as English and IT.
6. Initiated on-line and blended delivery programmes.
7. A well developed International programme on Master of Arts in Teacher Education.
8. Curriculum designed to be flexible enabling employed people to enrol
9. Instructions given in three languages, English, Sinhala and Tamil.
10. Won the Commonwealth of Learning Excellence Award in 2008. for the learning materials prepared for the MATE(International).

Weaknesses
1. Intended Learning outcomes of most of the courses are not given.
2. No substantial changes recommended in Curriculum revision.
3. All the stake holders have not been sought in Curriculum revision.

2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Strengths/ Good practices
1. Use of modern technological equipment in effectively facilitating dissemination of knowledge.
2. Self directed and self paced study.
3. Main teaching modes are course materials and day schools and contact sessions.
4. Opportunity to learn through exposure in practical settings.
5. A number of well qualified and experienced academic staff members including 4 PhD holders and 3 MPhil holders are available in the Department.
6. Junior staff members and non-academic staff give fullest support to teaching and assessment activities
7. Good library, AV centre and media house facilitate an effective teaching learning environment
8. Credit rating system is applied.
9. Marking schemes are prepared.
10. Formative and summative assessment in practice.

11. CA, group work and oral examinations are adopted in assessments
12. Papers are reviewed internally and externally

Weaknesses

1. Physical facilities for teaching and learning are inadequate and not satisfactory. There is one teaching laboratory without a multimedia projector. This defect can and should be rectified immediately.
2. Lack of experienced academics in regional centres.
3. Teaching and other materials are not received in the best condition possible at regional centres.

4. Statistical software packages for Data analysis are not introduced in the Research Methods course for the M.Ed.
5. Existing AV and Media House are not effectively and fully utilised
6. The number of day schools is limited
7. New Credit value and GPA system introduced in the university system has not been adopted.

3. Quality of Students including Student Progress and Achievements

Strengths/ Good practices
1. Heterogeneous group of students
2. Eligibility criteria for admission assures quality students at the entry point
3. Majority of students are employed
4. A good number of students receive first and second classes
5. A gold medal is offered to encourage students

Weaknesses
1. The rate of completion is rather discrete and irregular
2. The department has no records of alumni.

4. Extent of Use of Student Feedback

Strengths/ Good practices
1. Mainly used in informal ways.
2. Day school sessions provide opportunity to obtain student feedback
3. Student Representation at faculty level
4. An attempt has been made to introduce a feedback form into the teaching and learning process.
5. A good rapport is maintained between the staff and the students.

Weaknesses:
1. Feedback is received at the end of the semester.
2. No analysis of feedback is available and no utilization of feedback by the system in improving the quality of education in the department

5. Postgraduate Studies

Strengths/Good Practices
1. Many senior members of the staff are involved in supervision, teaching and coordination of the postgraduate programmes.
2. Many senior staff members engage themselves in quality research and publications.
3. Academic staff members are involved in activities pertaining to professional associations.
4. Several postgraduate programmes are conducted.
5. Students have the opportunity to continue up to the Ph.D. level.

Weaknesses
1. Completion rate of the M.Ed and MATE (International) programme is very low.
2. MPhil and PhD programmes do not receive sufficient attention mainly due to the inadequacy of senior academics to conduct MPhil and PhD degree programmes and supervise research.

3. No higher degrees committee responsible for all postgraduate degree programmes.

6. Peer Observation

Strengths/Good practices
1. Quality Circle discussions of the staff
2. Mentors are appointed for the junior staff
3. Training workshops for the staff are conducted.
4. Departmental meetings are held regularly.
5. Programme team meetings are held
6. Moderation of question papers and panel marking is in practice.
7. Setting, moderation and panel marking
8. Collaborative research and publications

Weaknesses
1. No formal peer observation
2. No teacher evaluation system.

7. Skills Development

Strengths/Good practices
1. Having a strong physical and human resource base facilitates skills development
2. Practically oriented teaching
3. Taking steps to improve language competency
4. Development of cognitive skills through service learning programmes
5. Development of IT skills catering to improvement of cognitive and personal skills.
6. Improvement in writing and presentation skills through assignments and dissertation components

Weaknesses:
1. Field investigations and outreach activities are limited.
2. Lack of time for extracurricular activities such as sports.
3. Lack of modern software packages.

8. Academic Guidance and Counselling

Strengths/Good practices
1. Availability of academic guidance including Faculty Handbook, the Department Prospectus, University and Faculty websites.
2. Usual university counselling system is not very much in practice
3. Programme coordinators are appointed
4. Orientation programmes providing the students with necessary information and background.
5. Informal contacts between individual lecturers and the students providing opportunity to give and seek advice on issues ranging from academic matters to personal issues.

Weaknesses
1. No trained counsellors
2. Inadequate and unsuitable space for counselling

3. Students relying more on informal rather than formal personal counselling and guidance programs.
4. Outreach potential is not realised.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The review team is agreed unanimously on the following recommendations:

1. More comprehensive revision of the curriculum with input from all stakeholders
2. Intended Learning Outcomes of all the programmes to be set.
3. Feasibility study and a need analysis be conducted before any new programme / course is offered.
4. Professional development programme for external academic staff to be conducted
5. Physical and technical quality of handouts to be improved
6. Create cadre provisions to fill the shortage of teachers/technical assistants to lessen the heavy work load and the administrative work borne by the academics
7. Provision of appropriate physical facilities, e.g. well equipped staff rooms
8. Simplify the general administrative procedures to avoid delays and inefficiency
9. Conversion of semester, credit and GPA system in line with that of the other universities in Sri Lanka
10. Buy useful software packages
11. Outreach activities to be expanded
12. Promote and encourage students to use online study programmes.
13. Place more emphasis on MPhil and PhD programmes
14. Higher degree committee/Postgraduate Faculty to be set up to conduct all the postgraduate programmes
15. Student feedback procedures need to be formalized considering the future benefits that the department may receive through this process by making it an integral part of teaching in every study program.
16. Feedback forms to be distributed among students midway in the semester in order to achieve better results
17. Adopt the practice of peer evaluation as a formal system according to established guidelines in this regard. This would prevent falling into various pitfalls with regard to the system which often causes unwanted problems.
18. Provide more residential facilities for students
19. Appointment of a professional counsellor.

7. ANNEXES

Annex 1. AGENDA FOR THE REVIEW VISIT

1st Day 17.02.2010

Item no.	Time	Event	Venue
1.	07.45 – 8.30	Private meeting with review panel with QAA Council representatives	Seminar room 1
2.	08.30 – 09.00	Meeting with the VC, Dean and the Head of the Dept.	VC's Office
3.	09.15 – 10.00	Discuss the agenda of the visit	Seminar Room 1
4.	10.00 – 11.00	Departmental presentation about the self evaluation report (Working tea)	Seminar Room 1
5.	11.00 – 12.00	Discussion	Seminar room 1
6.	12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	Lunch room
7.	13.00 – 13.30	Observing Departmental facilities	Dept. of STE
8.	13.30 – 14.00	Observing other facilities (Dept. and OUSL) (Research Centre, Computer labs, Library)	Research Centre, Elementary Computer Lab, SDC Computer Lab. Nodes Access Centres, Library)
9.	14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with Departmental Academic staff	Seminar room 1
10.	15.00 – 15.30	Meeting with Regional/Study Centre Academic Coordinators (Working Tea)	Seminar room 1
11.	15.30 – 16.00	Meeting with Departmental Support staff	Seminar room 1
12.	16.00 – 17.00	Brief meeting of reviewers	Seminar room 1

2nd Day 18.02.2010

Item	Time	Event	Venue
01.	09.00 – 10.00	Observing MEd Research Students' Progress Review Seminar	Seminar Room 1
02.	10.00 – 11.00	Observing a Teaching Session - PGDDE	Teaching Lab 1
03.	11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Masters Level Students (MEd, MATE, MATE-I) (Working Tea)	Professors' Room
04.	12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	Lunch room
05.	13.00 – 14.00	Meeting with Post Graduate Students (PGDE, PGDDE)	Seminar Room 1
06.	14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with Student Counselors	Seminar Room 1
07.	15.00 – 16.00	Observing documents(Working Tea)	Professors' Room
08.	16.00 – 17.00	Brief meeting with reviewers	Seminar Room 1

3ⁿᵈ Day 19.02.2010

Item	Time	Event	venue
01.	09.00 – 09.30	Observing documents / Online Courses	Research Room
02.	09.30 – 10.00	Observing Certificate Awards Ceremony - Online Course	Seminar Room 1
03.	10.00 – 11.00	Observing an Orientation Session - Online Course	Seminar Room 1
04.	11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Students (Online Course- Past and Present) (Working Tea)	Teaching Lab. 1
05.	12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	Lunch Room
06.	13.00 – 13.30	Meeting with Head & Staff	Faculty Board Room
07.	13.30 onwards	Reviewers Discussion & Report writing	Professors' Room

Annex 2. LIST OF FACILITIES OBSERVED

1. Office of the Department
2. Lecturers' Rooms
3. Lecture Halls
4. Computer Unit
5. Faculty Library
6. Main University Library
7. Research Centre
8. Nodes Access Centre

Annex 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

1. Faculty and Department Handbooks
2. Course Outlines
3. Handouts
4. Past Examination Papers (End of Semester)
5. Mid Semester Examination Papers
6. Attendance Sheets
7. Mark Sheets
8. Dissertations
9. Assignments
10. Student evaluation forms
11. Minutes of the Department Meetings
12. Academic staff Publications
13. AV Materials